EURICSE | WORKING PAPER SERIES

Working Paper n. 138 | 25
ISSN 2281-8235

Stefano Tortorici

MAPPING PLATFORM COOPERATIVES: IDENTITIES, DIMENSIONS AND CHALLENGES

Please cite this paper as:

Tortorici, S. (2025). Mapping Platform Cooperatives: Identities, Dimensions and Challenges, *Euricse Working Paper Series*, 138|25.

MAPPING PLATFORM COOPERATIVES: IDENTITIES, DIMENSIONS ANS CHALLENGES

Stefano Tortorici♣

Abstract

Digital solidarity economies have emerged as a response to the dominant platform capitalism of the past three decades. Despite a growing body of scholarship, the identities, dimensions, and challenges faced by platform cooperatives remain poorly understood. Notably, there are no quantitative studies based on a large number of platform cooperatives. This paper presents the first empirically grounded, aggregate mapping of the features of platform cooperatives. It distinguishes between *platform cooperativism* and *platform cooperatives*, addressing definitional issues that have emerged since the concept was first introduced. Drawing on the first international economic survey of platform cooperatives, data from 86 businesses across six continents illuminate the identities, dimensions, and challenges of 27 active platform cooperatives. Finally, the paper outlines four major challenges commonly faced by platform cooperatives: legal, financial, governance, and market-related.

Keywords

Platform Economy; Digital Solidarity Economies; Platform Cooperatives; Survey; Identities; Dimensions; Challenges

JEL Codes

J54; L31; P13; O33; L32

♣ Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa (Italy). Email: stefano.tortorici@sns.it

Table of contents

1. Introduction

The digital landscape has undergone a profound transformation since the rise of Web2 (Voshmgir, 2019). Yochai Benkler's vision of thriving non-market peer production and digital commons (Benkler, 2007; Pazaitis and Kostakis, 2021) has become a fleeting possibility. Once dominant, welcoming sharing economy narratives (Sundararajan, 2016) have given way to the pervasive reality of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017; Rahman and Thelen, 2019). Today, almost every aspect of life has been subsumed under market logic through platforms (Huws, 2014), fueling the platformization of both society and the economy (Srnicek, 2017; Van Dijck, Poell and De Waal, 2018).

As of November 24th 2025, the combined market capitalization of the five largest platform companies—Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, and Meta (recognized primarily as platforms; see Gawer and Srnicek, 2021)—stands at approximately 15 trillion USD[1], i.e., half of the combined value of the top 300 publicly traded technology firms worldwide at the end of 2024 (Hung, 2025). A vast and still expanding body of literature examines the accumulation of capital, the erosion of workers' bargaining power, and the precarious conditions faced by platform workers (Woodcock, 2021; Altenried, 2022; Cini, 2023). Additionally, several influential works have shed light on the exploitation of "farm workers" involved in training artificial intelligence systems (Gray and Suri, 2019; Crawford, 2021; Muldoon, Graham and Cant, 2024; Casilli, 2025; Hao, 2025). Meanwhile, labor movements worldwide (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2020; Woodcock, 2021; Della Porta, Chesta and Cini 2023; Yates, 2025) continue to highlight the precarity and dire working conditions brought about by the platform revolution (Parker, Van Alstyne and Choudary, 2016).

Social movements (Della Porta, Chesta and Cini, 2023), unions (e.g., International Workers Group and Food Delivery Workers Union), benchmarking initiatives (e.g., Fairwork), legislative efforts (e.g., *Ley de Trabajo en Plataformas* and the *Platform Work Directive*), as well as some consumer and traditional business associations (Cutolo, Hargadon and Kenney, 2021), are actively striving to countervail platform power (Figure 1) (Galbraith 1952; Culpepper and Thelen, 2020). By involving diverse strategies, actors, and interests, these initiatives highlight the dire working conditions, the monopolistic power of big tech companies, and the urgent need to build digital sovereignty for both people and the planet (Rikap et. al, 2024; Bria, Timmers and Gernone, 2025).

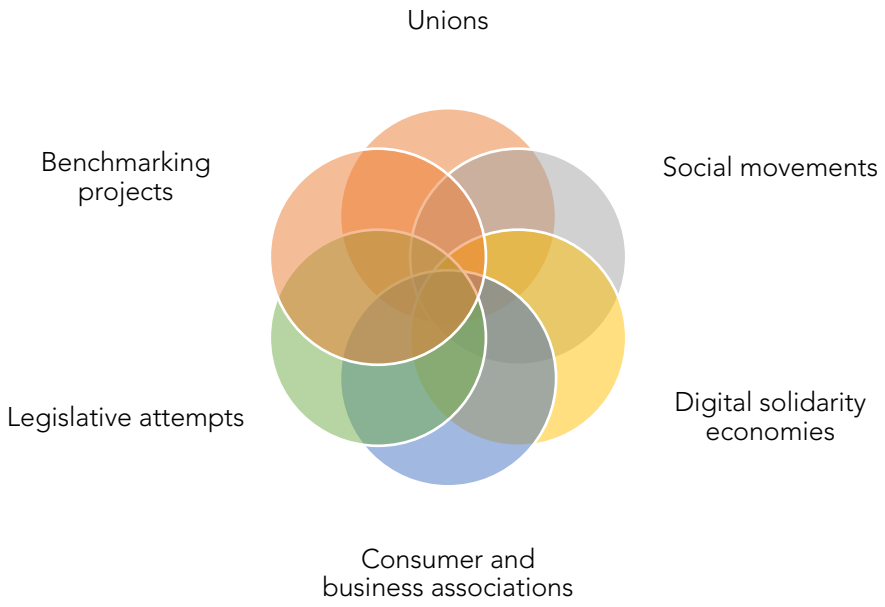
---

[1] Company market cap (2025). See: https://companiesmarketcap.com [Accessed: 9 December 2025].

Alongside these efforts, since the dawn of the digital era, digital solidarity economies (Albornoz et al., 2024)—such as digital commons (Benkler, 2007), certain decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs; Hassan and De Filippi, 2021; 2023), AI for the people (Hung, 2025), and digital cooperatives, including platform cooperatives (Scholz and Schneider, 2017; Scholz, 2023a; 2023b) and AI cooperatives (Scholz and Tortorici, 2025a; 2025b)—have sought to create a more democratic, collectively owned, and non-profit-driven internet (Figure 2).

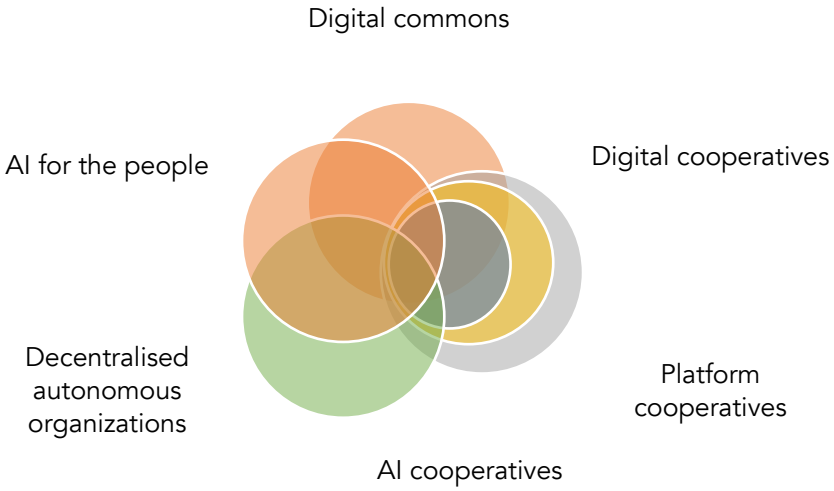
Both the initiatives countervailing platform power and digital solidarity economies may, of course, involve the same actors and converge, as suggested by the overlapping circles in Figure 1 and 2. For example, some unions choose to establish platform cooperatives, while some platform cooperatives, in turn, work to advance new legislation (Tortorici, 2026, forthcoming). Moreover, a platform cooperative can operate as a DAO (e.g., D.org), a federation of platform cooperatives can manage their platform as a digital common (e.g., CoopCycle), and a platform cooperative can own and manage an AI tool (e.g., Readcoop with Transkribus; see Terras et al., 2025).

Figure 1. Main initiatives countervailing platform power



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Figure 2. Digital solidarity economies



Source: Author's original elaboration.

This study focuses on platform cooperatives as after 10 years since their initial conception (Orsi, 2014; Schneider, 2014; Scholz, 2014; Schor, 2014), there remains significant ambiguity surrounding the economic dimensions and global distribution of platform cooperatives. Platform cooperatives are usually defined as businesses that sell goods or services primarily through a website, mobile app, or protocol. They rely on democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership by workers and users (Scholz 2023b; see PCC website[2]). The theoretical framework further develops this definition by emphasizing the need to establish a primary measurement to account for the platform-based nature of platform cooperatives and their adherence to the International Cooperative Alliance's Cooperative Principles (Mayo, 2019).

Furthermore, the literature on the challenges of platform cooperatives is mostly based on in depth qualitative cases or few comparative studies involving few cases. This paper represents a pioneering attempt to address these gaps by examining the identities, dimensions and challenges of 27 platform cooperatives, differentiating them from platform cooperativism as a broader social movement. Following the presentation of the methodology and theoretical framework, drawing on insights from the first

[2] https://platform.coop/ [Accessed: 17 December 2025].

international survey of economic data on platform cooperatives, this paper makes three main contributions: (1) it distinguishes between platform cooperativism and platform cooperatives, addressing definitional issues that have emerged since the concept was first introduced; (2) it classifies the 86 survey respondents identifying 27 active platform cooperatives; (3) it provides an empirically grounded overview of these platform cooperatives' identities, dimensions, and challenges.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Platform cooperativism

The dualities inherent in cooperativism—a plural social movement grounded in an economic enterprise—are also present in platform cooperativism (Tortorici, 2025). Alfred Marshall (2014: 28) captured this tension: "Some movements have a high social purpose; others, an economic purpose. Only cooperatives have both".

Even if it lacks a formal democratic body to articulate its agenda (Tortorici, 2025), and there is a need to cultivate more cohesive networks and collective actions, from a social movement studies perspective (Della Porta and Diani, 2020), platform cooperativism qualifies as a social movement: it contests platform capitalism, builds informal networks, and fosters collective identity. Born as a reaction to digital labor exploitation, it has grown into a global movement reversing digital ownership dynamics (Scholz and Schneider, 2017; Martin, 2017; Schneider 2018; Scholz 2023b). The "directory" of the Platform Cooperativism Consortium (hereafter PCC) offers the most comprehensive mapping of the movement, with 643 initiatives listed in 53 countries (as of November 2025), but only 295 are labeled as cooperatives. Scholz's (2023b) vision and PCC's directory includes federations (e.g., Legacoop), researchers, accelerators (e.g., Start.coop), and digital advocacy platforms. However, the directory lacks clear criteria, includes inactive or supportive-only initiatives, and does not focus strictly on enterprises.

Also, regarding the platform cooperative movement, there is a need for further quantitative and qualitative understanding of its identities, collective actions, and dimensions. The impact report[3] of the PCC highlights some key moments and figures of the movement; however, it does not address scholars, and its numbers often would

[3] https://ia601204.us.archive.org/9/items/pccimpact-report-june-18-2025/PCCImpactReportJune18_2025.pdf [Accessed: 9 December 2025].

require further explanation. For example, it states that 1.2 million people work in platform cooperatives, but it would be valuable to understand how they determined this number.

While the PCC provides broad numbers of the movement ecosystem, there is not even an approximate estimate of the number and scale of platform cooperatives themselves. More targeted efforts to detect them are found in Damion Bunders' *Gigs on Their Own* (2024) and Morshed Mannan's *The Emergence of Democratic Firms in The Platform Economy* (2022), but both have limitations: Mannan's data is outdated for charting "a moving target" (Van Dijck, Poell and De Waal, 2018) and includes numerous projects that have already failed; Bunders focuses instead only on European gig platforms. Neither gathers data directly from cooperative founders. This paper defines platform cooperatives narrowly as economic entities, while acknowledging the broader platform cooperativism movement.

2.2. Platform cooperatives

First appearing as a type of worker cooperative in a blog post by Las Indias (Schneider, 2018; Schor, 2020), platform cooperatives were named over a decade ago (Orsi, 2014; Schneider, 2014; Scholz, 2014; Schor, 2014), while the term "platform cooperativism" was coined by Scholz in 2016 in a widely disseminated report by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, available in multiple languages (Scholz, 2016), and further developed in the collective book *Ours to Hack and to Own* edited by Scholz and Schneider (2017).

However, the concept of platform cooperatives remains in flux (Scholz, 2023a; 2023b). Legal form is a secondary criterion due to jurisdictional variation. More crucial is their platform and cooperative identity. Earlier definitions included any cooperative with a website (PCC 2018-2023), but recent PCC language defines them as:

> "businesses that sell goods or services **primarily** through a website, mobile app, or protocol. They rely on democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership by workers and users" (Scholz, 2023b; PCC website 2024).

Yet "primarily through a website, mobile app, or protocol" remains vague. Metrics like transaction volume or what is a platform need clarification. Moreover, being digital does not necessarily mean platform-based. For example, small software cooperatives may do not use data and lack a service or labor marketplace and thus fail to qualify as platforms. Some of these reflections arose after the survey had already been distributed, and this

paper also adopts the adjective "primarily" in the new definition offered below to characterize the platform nature of these cooperatives. However, in analysing the results, an organization was considered a platform only if at least 50% of its transactions were intermediated through it, and by the existence of a marketplace. Nevertheless, it may be more appropriate to replace "primarily" with a reference to the criterion that at least 50% of transactions must be intermediated through the platform.

Mannan (2022) and Bunders (2024) distinguish between *cooperative-run platforms* (traditional cooperatives developing a platform) and *platform cooperatives* (platforms founded as cooperatives). Martinelli et al. (2019) note a geography split: the former are more common in Europe, the latter in the U.S.. Some initiatives may rely on basic external tech (e.g., WhatsApp) without genuinely operating as platforms.

Some cooperatives explicitly reject the label "intermediaries," arguing their ownership structure differentiates them from capitalist platforms. While capitalist platforms (Figure 3.A) act as third-party intermediaries between workers and customers, platform cooperatives (Figure 3.B) involve worker-owners directly connecting with customers via co-owned platforms. In multistakeholder models (Figure 3.C), different stakeholders co-own and govern the platform democratically.

Figure 3A. Capitalist digital platform

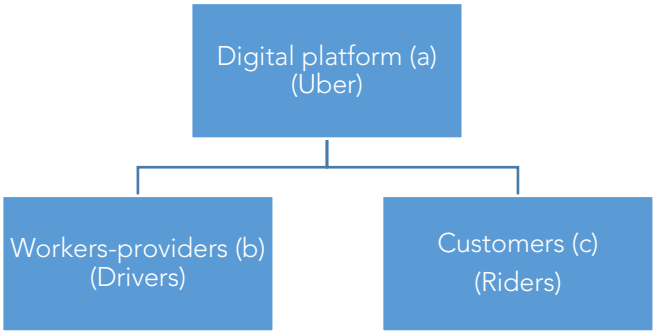


Figure 3B. Platform cooperative

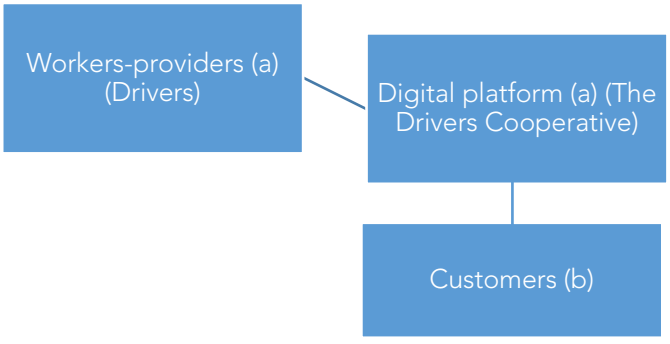
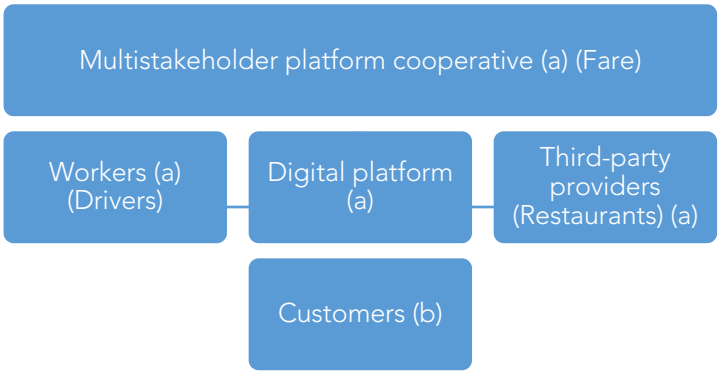


Figure 3C. Multistakeholder platform cooperative



Source: Author's original elaboration.

To highlight their platform nature, it's important to distinguish between first and second order cooperatives. Second-order cooperatives like CoopCycle—a federation of around 40 rider cooperatives—own and govern a shared platform. However, though structurally distinct, many first-order cooperatives within the federation adapt and use the shared platform in diverse ways, operating as platform cooperatives themselves. Still, their degree of reliance on the shared platform and adherence to cooperative principles varies.

Defining "cooperative" itself requires nuance. The PCC adopts the International Cooperative Alliance (hereafter ICA) definition:

> "A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise."

Mayo (2019) stresses further that adherence to the ICA's cooperative identity statement, i.e., the cooperative definition and the seven cooperative principles, is essential to distinguishing genuine platform cooperatives. Yet critics (Ratner, 2013; 2015) argue that these principles are vague, e.g., they do not clearly define what democracy entails, thus contributing to the neoliberal dilution of the cooperative movement. These critiques deserve to be taken seriously; there is indeed the need to further define cooperatives and their political values. However, since the principles are not the main focus of this study, the paper adopts the ICA's definition and principles. Table 1 presents a summary of the main definitions of platform cooperatives outlining their characterization of platform and cooperative identity along their main features.

In order to capture both the platform-based and cooperative dimensions of platform cooperatives—while taking into account cooperative principles, emphasizing the

necessity of a platform business model, and remaining inclusive of organizations that do not strictly adhere to all seven cooperative principles or to specific features such as the members' platform design—this survey defines platform cooperatives as:

> "primarily digital businesses that intermediate different types of users—often using user data—and adhere, at least partially, to the ICA's cooperative principles. They are collectively owned, democratically governed, and typically designed by their worker and/or user-members."

Below is a more precise definition of platform cooperatives, based on clearer criteria for identifying both their platform characteristics and their cooperative identity:

> "platform cooperatives are digital businesses that intermediate at least the **50% of transactions** among different types of users **online**—often using user data—and adhere, **at their best**, to the ICA's cooperative principles. They are collectively owned, democratically governed, and typically designed by their worker and/or users."

Table 1. Platform cooperatives definitions

	Definition	Platform	Cooperative	Main features
Scholz and Schneider (2017)	X (missing). They refer to the movement, but never neatly define platform cooperatives.	X	X	Shared ownership and democratic governance.
PCC website 2018- 2023	Platform cooperatives are businesses that sell goods or services through a website, mobile app, or protocol. They rely on democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership by workers and users.	A website, mobile app, or protocol. Next to the definition: a platform is an online application or website used by individuals or groups to connect to one another or to organize services.	X Next to the definition: a cooperative is defined as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.	Democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership.
Mayo (2019)	An enterprise that operates primarily through digital platforms for interaction or	X Primarily	**ICA statement** on the	A digital platform following ICA

	the exchange of goods and/or services and is structured in line with the ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity.		Cooperative Identity.	cooperative principles.
Martinelli and Tamascelli (2019)	A platform cooperative is a cooperative enterprise, characterised by shared ownership and democratic governance, in which the use of digital technologies supports the consumption, exchange and production of goods and services and maximises the generation and distribution of value within a community.	X	X	Shared ownership and democratic governance; maximises the generation and distribution of value within a community.
Scholz (2023a)	Those among us in the field share these tenets: platform cooperatives are based on the broad-based ownership of platforms. This includes also users and not only workers. Platform cooperatives also function through democratic governance.	X	X	Broad-based ownership of platforms; democratic governance. Emphasis on **collective design**.
Scholz (2023b); PCC website 2024-2025	Platform cooperatives are businesses that sell goods or services **primarily** through a website, mobile app, or protocol. They rely on democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership by workers and users.	**Primarily** website, mobile app, or protocol. Next to the definition: a platform is an online application or website used by individuals or groups to connect to one another or to organize services.	X Next to the definition: a cooperative is defined as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.	Democratic decision-making and shared platform ownership.
Tortorici (2025)	Platform cooperatives are digital businesses that intermediate at least the 50%	Digital businesses that intermediate **at**	ICA's cooperative	Collectively owned, democratically

	of transactions among different types of users online—often using user data—and adhere, at their best, to the ICA's cooperative principles. They are collectively owned, democratically governed, and typically designed by their worker and/or user-members.	**least the 50% of transactions** among different types of users online—often using user data.	principles, **at their best**.	governed, and typically designed by their worker and/or user-members.

Source: Author's original elaboration.

Despite the growing visibility of platform cooperatives, there is a lack of large-scale empirical research on their economic dimensions. Nor is there any study presenting extensive aggregate data on their geography, history, legal forms, activities and business models, use of data, or adoption of digital and blockchain technologies. In these domains, the data provide, for the first time, an empirically robust picture of the phenomenon—one that may help situate and potentially generalise insights from in-depth case studies.

2.3. The challenges of platform cooperatives

Even though the challenges faced by platform cooperatives have occasionally been mentioned, including in the broader literature on digital labor, only recently has scholarship begun to address these challenges in depth.

Digital labor scholars have often briefly mentioned platform cooperatives as a potential solution to the exploitation and negative externalities of the platform economy, while also noting the challenges they face. Schor (2020) attributes their limited proliferation to structural issues, such as financing restrictions, competition with dominant firms, and stakeholder tensions, noting that their idealistic foundations can hinder growth and expose them to market pressures. Muldoon, Graham and Cant (2024) also emphasize scaling difficulties due to limited capital, with traditional investors avoiding models offering less control and slower returns. Citing Scholz (2023b), they stress the importance of supportive ecosystems, such as cooperative banks and favorable

regulation. While large-scale tech investments may prevent the formation of large data centers and AI labs that train foundation model, they argue cooperatives are promising in areas like data annotation, art collectives, and data cooperatives. Casilli (2025), drawing on Grohmann, describes "dead platform co-ops" that fail to scale and platform cooperatives recurring challenges: weak organizational culture, scarce resources, poor planning, high turnover, limited user bases, costly technology, and coordination issues in distributed workforces.

As early as 2018, Schneider (2018) has highlighted the significant barriers faced by the platform cooperative model, including limited financing, market entry challenges, public awareness, and intense competition. Some studies have pointed to institutional, market, and legal tensions (Pentzien, 2020; Scholz et al., 2021; Bunders and De Moor, 2023). Others have more recently focused on governance and member participation (Bunders, 2023; Mannan and Pek, 2023; Ghirlanda and Kirov, 2024), while sectoral and geographic conditions have been identified as key factors influencing their feasibility (Grohmann, 2021; 2023; Bunders et al., 2022).

This paper does not aim to further qualitatively describe these challenges or to uncover new ones. Instead, it offers a quantitative assessment of which challenges are most acutely perceived by platform cooperative managers, while providing an identikit of the identities and key dimensions of 27 platform cooperatives.

3. Methodology

In response to the evolving definition of platform cooperatives and the identified gaps in understanding the numbers, identities and challenges of platform cooperatives worldwide, an international survey was launched in March 2024 (Appendix A). Comprising 46 questions organised into five distinct sections, the survey delves into critical issues surrounding identity, workforce dynamics, financial investments, governance mechanisms, the use of digital technologies, and the challenges faced by platform cooperatives. Co-founders and managers of platform cooperatives participated in completing the questionnaire. On August 1st 2024, with the final response submitted, the survey had received replies from 86 businesses across all six continents (Appendix B). If you are interested in the survey structure, please refer to Section 3.1; while if you wish to read more on the dissemination and the sample selection process, please read Appendix D. Otherwise, refer directly to Section 4.

The survey included four ranking questions. In the findings, the figures labelled "score" (e.g., *score of challenges*) correspond to these and have been aggregated. Scores were

calculated by assigning pre-determined numerical values to the selected choices, i.e., 0,99 for the first choice, 0,66 for second, 0,33 for the third.

To prevent the identification of respondents, evidently identifiable details such as country, year of foundation or immediately recognizable activities have been removed. The tables are also not consistently numbered, ensuring that complete information about any individual organization cannot be reconstructed. As stated in the survey's dissemination materials, the data are used solely to provide an aggregate picture of platform cooperatives.

3.1. Cooperative challenges and survey structure

The primary objective of the survey was to gain clarity on the landscape of platform cooperatives, with a focus on their identities and dimensions. However, as Yochai Benkler (2017) highlighted, the transformative role of cooperativism within capitalism has historically been limited. For platform cooperatives to demonstrate their transformative potential—addressing inequalities and exploitation in the digital economy—they must confront significant challenges. Traditionally, cooperatives have struggled with issues such as raising capital, maintaining alternative values in competitive markets, and safeguarding democracy and worker conditions as they scale (Tortorici, 2025).

In addition to these traditional challenges, platform cooperatives must also contend with the imperative to profit from data. These obstacles raise fundamental questions about the viability of platform cooperativism as a genuine alternative to digital capitalism. The survey delves deeper into these traditional challenges to provide a comprehensive analysis.

The first section of the survey is dedicated to explicitly identifying platform cooperatives and understanding the circumstances surrounding their establishment. Key aspects investigated include their legal structure, geographical reach, membership dynamics, their perception of operating as a platform, their approach to data utilisation, the extent of their online presence, adherence to ICA principles, primary for-profit and altruistic activities, as well as the sectors they operate in, and their underlying values.

The second section delves further into crucial details essential for defining platforms, such as the number of providers and users. However, its primary focus is on understanding their workforce and organisational structure. Specifically, this section seeks to determine the number of workers engaged with the platform, distinguishing

between those working for and through the platform. Platforms often employ workers directly, such as lawyers or software developers, who work either as full-time employees or contractors. Additionally, these platforms generate employment opportunities through the ecosystems they create, indirectly involving thousands of workers (Mannan and Pek, 2023). The section examines the nature of these employment roles, including whether they are full or part-time positions, and seeks the approximate hourly salary of the most common category of workers. It also explores the ownership structure of these organisations, investigating whether they are predominantly owned by their workers or rely primarily on contractors and waged employees. Moreover, it examines the extent to which workers participate in co-determining contracts, providing insights into their involvement in decision-making processes.

The third section addresses the critical issue of finance within platform cooperatives, which remains a significant challenge for these entities, mirroring the struggles of traditional cooperatives in accessing capital. Contrary to early assumptions within the platform cooperative movement (Benkler, 2017; Martin, 2017) access to finance may represent an even more fundamental challenge for platform cooperatives compared to their traditional counterparts (Borkin, 2019). This is particularly evident in the platform economy, which is characterised by monopolistic tendencies and the pivotal role of financial investments (Srnicek, 2017). Initially, the section examines the revenue streams of platform cooperatives. It then investigates the quantity and nature of their main investors, which may include venture capitalists, banks, awards, members, crowdfunding, and others. Lastly, it asks about the financial contributions required for individuals or entities to become members of these cooperatives.

The fourth section focuses on the governance of platform cooperatives and the formal democratic processes central to their operations. Key questions in this section include identifying who is responsible for making key decisions within the cooperative and determining the composition of the board of directors. This involves specifying the number of directors on the board, explaining the process by which they are selected, and identifying the parties involved in this process. The section concludes with an open-ended question inviting participants to share insights into the strengths and weaknesses of their cooperative's governance mechanisms.

The fifth section explores the potential of blockchain technology for cooperatives (Nabben et al., 2021; Mannan, 2022; Robey, 2022). Initially, respondents are asked whether their platform cooperatives utilise blockchain technology and, if so, in what capacity. This aims to gauge the extent to which blockchain is leveraged within the cooperative ecosystem. Respondents are then prompted to rank their three main

challenges from a list that includes management issues, limited access to finance, restricted market opportunities, low user and client engagement, limited member participation, challenges in democratic participation and strategies, and scarcity of demand. This ranking provides valuable insights into the most pressing issues facing platform cooperatives. Additionally, the survey investigates whether respondents have encountered regulatory barriers and, if so, the nature of these challenges. Finally, respondents are invited to share additional comments.

4. Classification of respondents

The survey reached approximately 245 organizations worldwide[4], with 86 organizations responding (Appendix B). This represents one-third of the targeted organizations. The demographics of the respondents—including size, age, and geographic distribution—closely mirror those of the organizations to which the survey was distributed.

Additionally, the survey process facilitated the identification of inactive platform cooperatives, offering valuable insights for platform cooperative studies focusing increasingly on learning from failures to address challenges within platform cooperatives (see Scholz and Mannan, 2024; Casilli, 2025; Grohmann, 2025). Over 60 organizations have been categorized as either inactive or failed (Appendix C). On these inactive platform cooperatives, we have just launched another survey[5].

4.1. The legal geography of 83 respondents

The respondents, like the organizations of interest, are primarily registered in the Global North, including the United States, Canada, and Europe. Specifically, 16 are registered in the USA, 13 in France, eight in the UK, seven in both Spain and Canada, five in Italy, and four in Belgium (Table 2). A smaller number are based in Latin America (three in Brazil and two in Argentina) and Asia (two each in Thailand and Turkey, and one in the Philippines), with only one organization registered in Africa and one in Australia. Three responses did not include registration details. It is not easy to account for the geographical skewness of the respondents. Language may have played a role, both in shaping the sample and in influencing who felt able to respond, as may the greater

[4] These were selected primarily from the PCC Directory in January 2024, which was subsequently updated.

[5] https://research-survey.sns.it/index.php/283967?newtest=Y&lang=en [Accessed: 17 December 2025].

visibility of Global North organizations. However, we believe the data still accurately reflect the landscape, given the overall lower number of initiatives in Global South countries.

Table 2. Legal geography of 83 respondents

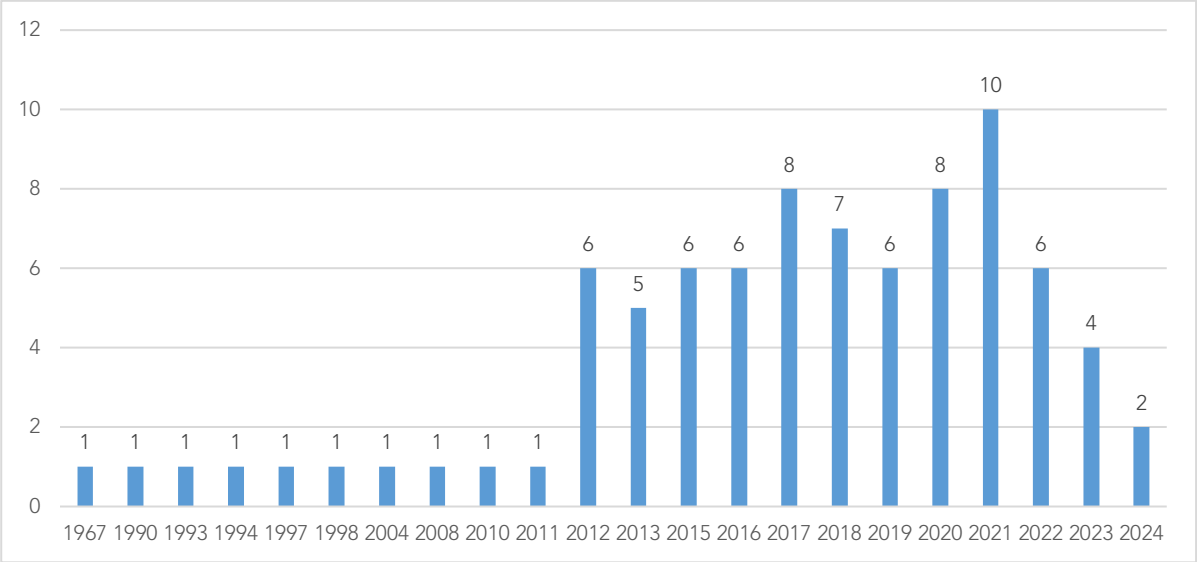
Legal country	Number
USA	16
France	13
UK	8
Canada	7
Spain	7
Italy	5
Belgium	4
Brazil	3
Argentina	2
Germany	2
Mexico	2
Thailand	2
Turkey	2
Australia	1
Austria	1
Denmark	1
Estonia	1
Ireland	1
New Zealand	1
Peru	1
Philippines	1
the Netherlands	1
South Africa	1

Source: Author's original elaboration.

4.2. Year of registration of 86 respondents

Examining the registration years, the organizations have been legally established over the past 12 years, with a noticeable decline in registrations following a peak in 2021 (Figure 4). Up until 2011, there was only one registration per year. In contrast, the average rose to six registrations annually between 2011 and 2022. Peaks occurred in 2017 and 2020, with eight registrations each, seven in 2018, and a high of 10 in 2021. However, a rapid decline is evident from 2021 onward: six in 2022, four in 2023, and just two in 2024.

Figure 4. Year of registration of 86 respondents



Source: Author's original elaboration.

4.3. Classification of the respondents

Based on the first definition provided (Section 2.2.), respondents were empirically classified as active platform cooperatives according to four key variables: being (1) primarily a platform, (2) a cooperative, (3) primarily online, and (4) active.

To define these variables, nine questions were taken into account. Specifically, organizations that answered "yes" to being primarily platform and to utilizing digital technology for intermediation or sales were classified as platforms. Cooperatives were identified based on their adherence, at least partially, to ICA cooperative principles and their demonstration of broad democratic governance. The "primarily online" status was determined directly through a specific survey question. To evaluate whether they were active or inactive, data on transactions, clients, providers, and revenue were analyzed.

By cross-referencing these variables, eight types of organizations emerge (Figure 5):

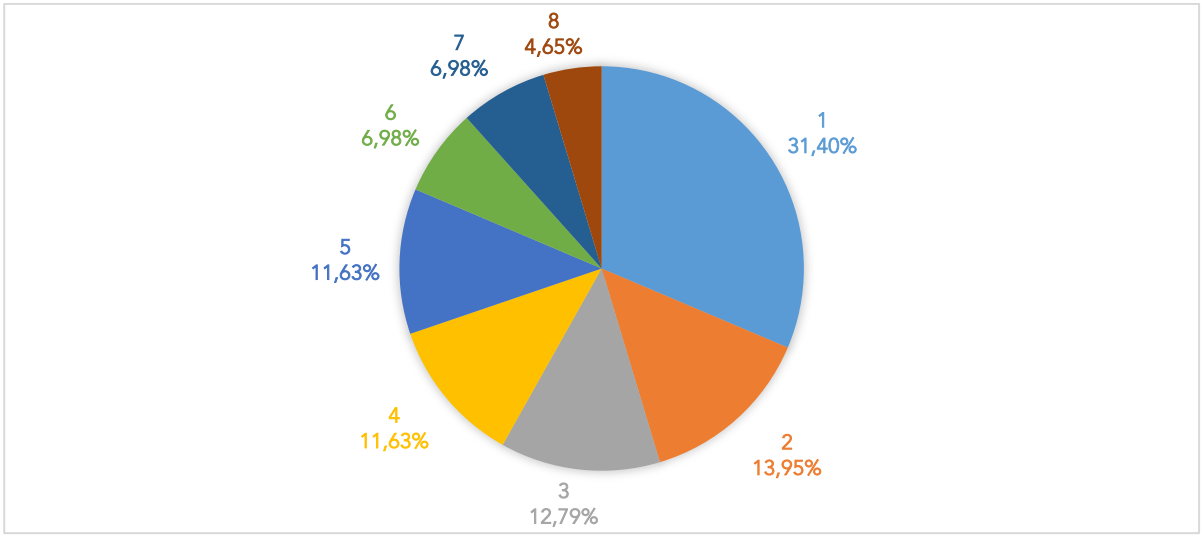
1. Platform cooperatives (27): primarily platform, online, cooperative, and active.
2. Cooperatives (12): cooperative organizations that are active but not primarily platform or online.
3. Digital cooperatives (11): primarily online, cooperative, and active, but not platforms.
4. Hybrid cooperatives (10): primarily platform, cooperative, and active, but not primarily online.

5. Just launched or inactive platform cooperatives (10): primarily platform, online, and cooperative, but inactive or launched in 2024 (2).
6. Non-cooperative platforms (6): primarily platform, online, and active, but not cooperatively owned.
7. Others (6): other organizations that do not fit neatly into the categories.
8. Inactive digital cooperatives (4): primarily online and cooperative, but inactive.

In a nutshell, there are three main types of platform cooperatives:

1. Platform cooperatives: primarily platform, online, and active cooperatives.
2. Hybrid cooperatives: cooperative-run platforms where the main business is not yet fully online or is only partially online.
3. Inactive platform cooperatives: platform cooperative projects that are either just launched, on hold, or nearing failure.

Figure 5. Classification of respondents



Source: Author's original elaboration.

5. Identities, dimensions and challenges

Looking through more than 40 variables, this section focuses on the identities, dimensions, and challenges of 27 platform cooperatives (hereafter referred to as platform cooperatives). An additional study is in progress on the rest of the dataset.

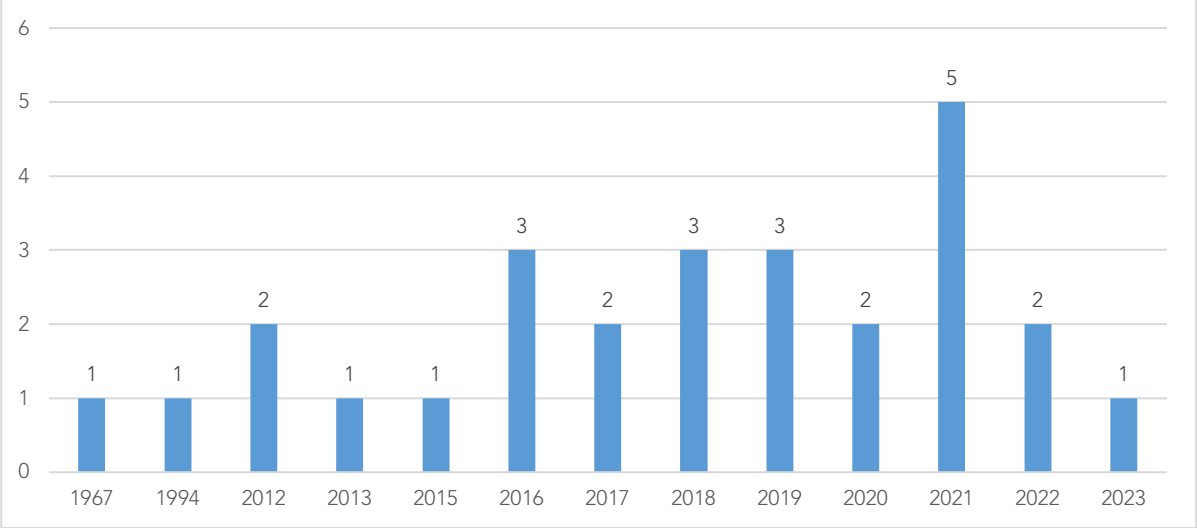
5.1. Identities and activities

This section provides an empirical overview of the history, geography, business models, activities, legal forms, and the use of data, digital, and blockchain of platform cooperatives.

5.1.1. History

Data on the year of legal registration confirms at least three key patterns (Figure 6). First, platform cooperatives are a recent phenomenon that has emerged primarily over the past decade, with legal registrations rising from just four in 2012—including some traditional cooperatives not yet fully platform-based—to 27 by 2023. Second, the majority of these cooperatives (18) were registered between 2016 and 2021, marking a period of significant growth. Third, while the number of platform cooperatives increased steadily and even exponentially during that five-year span, the pace of new registrations has declined over the past three years.

Figure 6. Year of registration



Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.1.2. Geography

Despite the PCC's efforts to foster the movement in the Global South, most platform cooperatives are legally registered in the Global North: five in the United States, three each in Canada, France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, and two in Italy. In Latin America, only two are registered, one in Brazil and one in Mexico. In Asia, there is one

in Thailand and one in Turkey. None are registered in Africa, and only one is registered in Australia.

Table 3. Legal geography

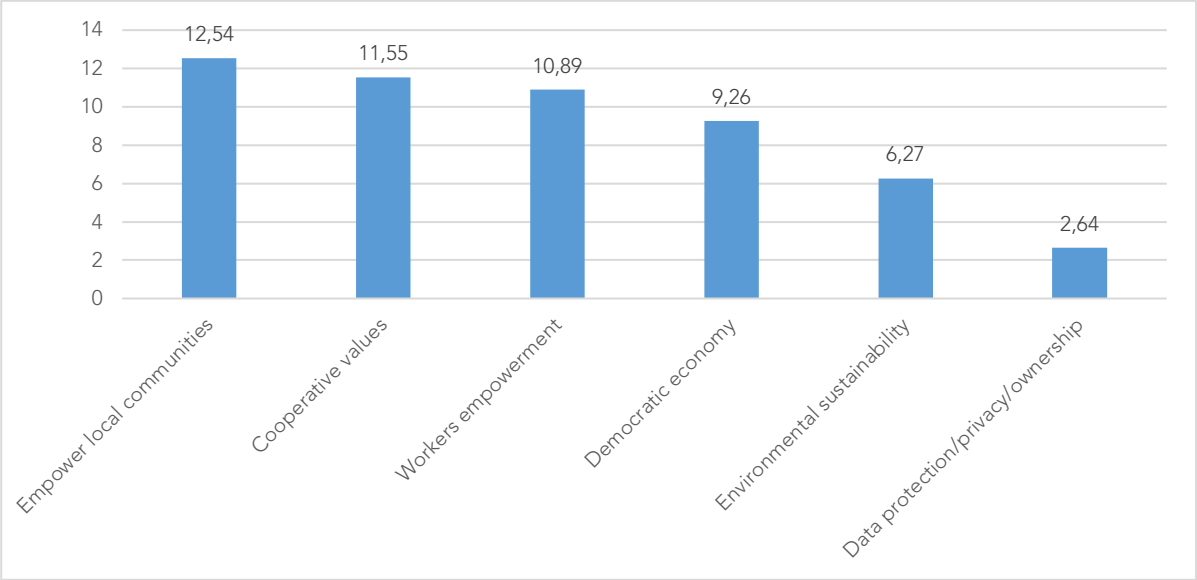
Legal country	Number
USA	5
Belgium	3
Canada	3
France	3
UK	3
Italy	2
Australia	1
Austria	1
Brazil	1
Estonia	1
Mexico	1
Thailand	1
the Netherlands	1
Turkey	1

However, when examining their physical and digital operations, the picture shifts dramatically. Eleven platform cooperatives operate across multiple countries, and one reports being active in as many as 85 countries.

5.1.3. Values

In retrospect, especially the framing of the question on values could have been improved. Some respondents highlighted the absence of explicitly feminist values, and at minimum, anti-racism and anti-ableism should have been included as key parameters. It is also worth noting that cooperative values partially overlap with the concept of a democratic economy. Among the options provided, platform cooperatives demonstrated a distinct emphasis on empowering local communities, followed by cooperative principles, workers' empowerment, and support for a democratic economy (Figure 7). There is also a notable focus on environmental sustainability, whereas only a few respondents identified data ownership, protection, and privacy as their top priorities.

Figure 7. Score of values

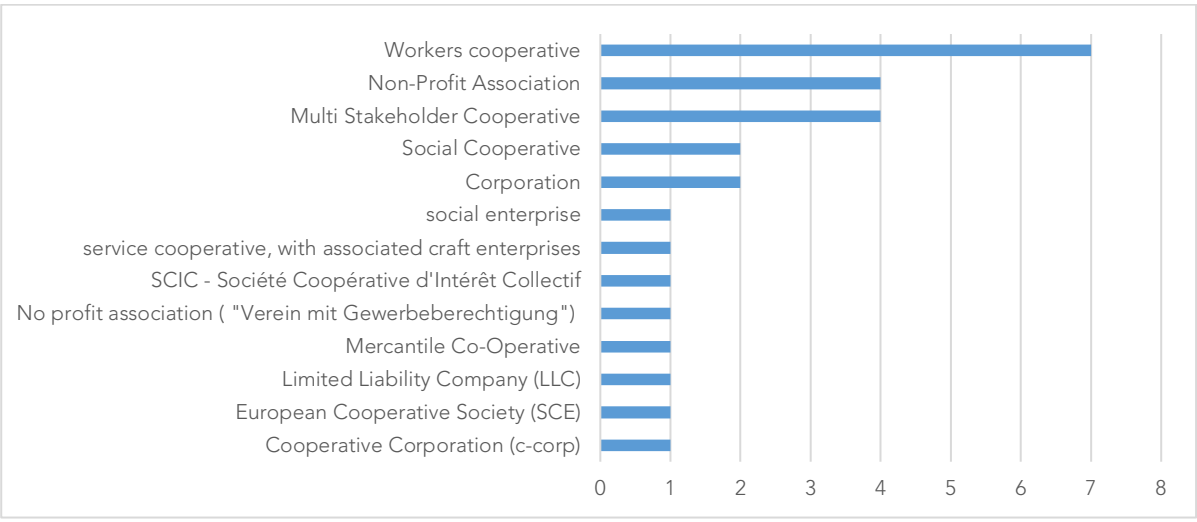


Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.1.4. Business and legal form

As shown in Figure 8, platform cooperatives are most commonly registered as worker cooperatives (seven), followed by non-profit associations and multistakeholder cooperatives (four each). Notably, two are registered as social cooperatives, two as corporations, and several others fall under different legal forms—highlighting the sector's legal diversity. In Figure 9, the reader can observe where the legal forms appear.

Figure 8. Legal forms



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Figure 9. Legal form per country

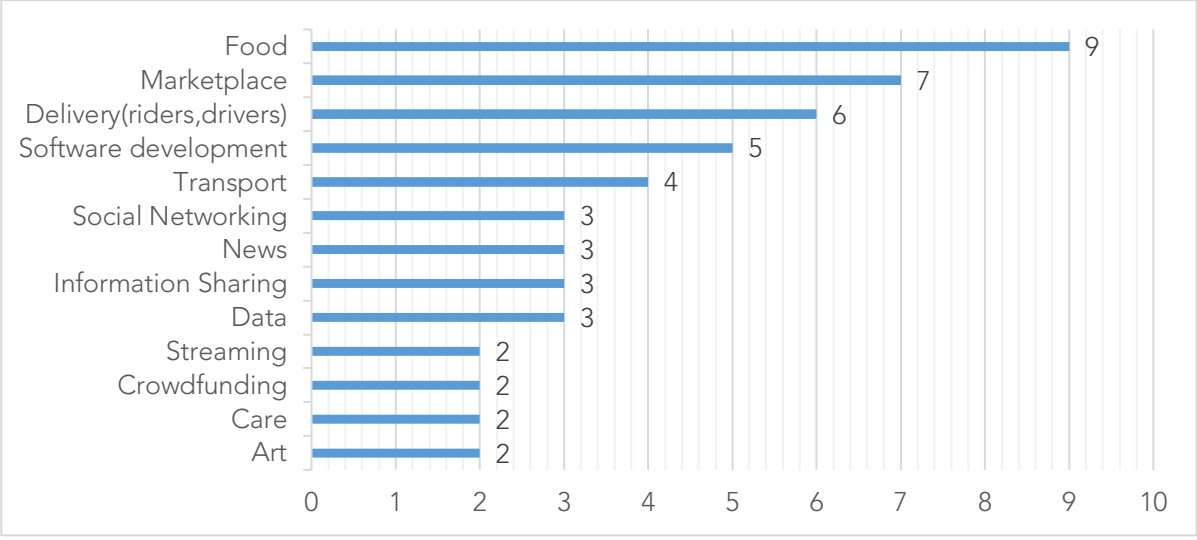
Cooperative corporation (c-corp)	1	USA
European cooperative society (SCE)	1	Belgium
Limited liability company (LLC)	1	USA
Mercantile cooperative [it does not exist as a legal form in the USA. They are probably a cooperative corporation]	1	USA
No profit association (*Verein mit Gewerbeberechtigung*)	1	Austria
Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif (SCIC)	1	France
Service cooperative, with associated craft enterprises	1	Italy
Social enterprise	1	Thailand
Corporation	2	Brazil, Mexico
Social cooperative	2	Belgium, Turkey
Multi stakeholder cooperative	4	Canada, UK
Non-profit association	4	Belgium, Canada, France, Australia
Worker's cooperative	7	France, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Italy, Estonia

Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.1.5. Activities

The most frequent activities include food, marketplace, delivery (riders-drivers), software development, and transport. Other notable activities include data, social networking, news, information sharing, and crowdfunding, art, streaming and care (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Main activities



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Looking by products platform cooperatives sell for a fee these data are confirmed. Food-related activities appeared several times, including food delivery and local food. Transport services, especially taxi transport, are also mentioned frequently. Software development and cloud services are listed in various capacities, including Web3 development and GIS platforms. A variety of services like training, sign language interpreting, and e-commerce are also mentioned. In Table 4 the activities of some platform cooperatives are explained more extensively.

Table 4. Activities

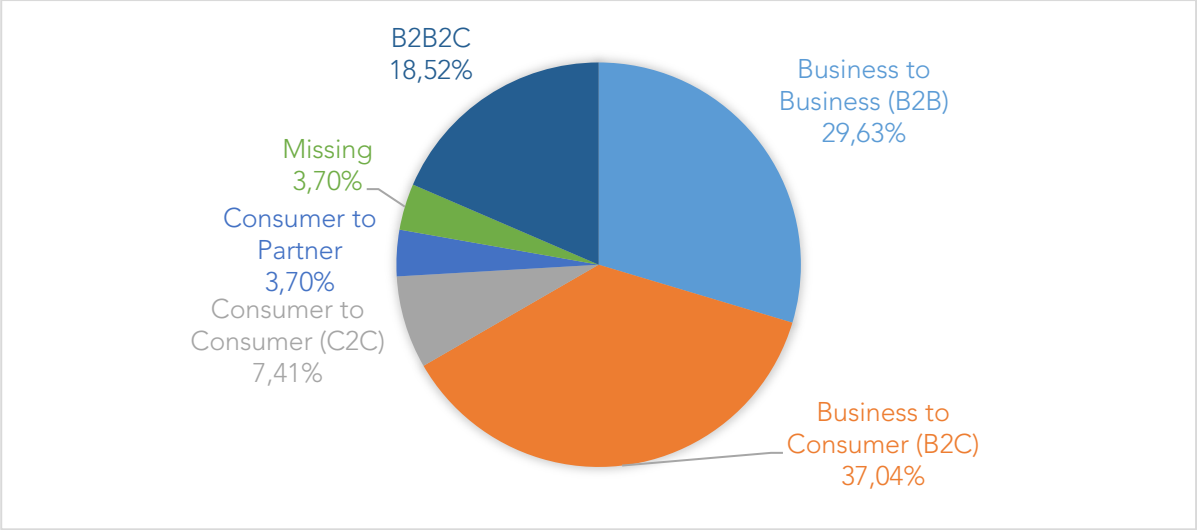
A global federation of rider collectives uniting delivery workers.
A food delivery service founded by former Deliveroo and Uber Eats riders, aiming for fair collaboration between riders, restaurants, and platforms.
A European cooperative that develops sustainable mobility services for local communities through an IT platform.
A driver-owned cooperative providing ride-hailing and delivery services.
A crowdfunded, open-source delivery platform that allows delivery workers to organize autonomously.
A cooperative supporting solidarity economy organizations with data-sharing infrastructure.
Providing hosting, development, and consulting for open-source digital life sovereignty with horizontal integrations.
A social platform connecting those in need with supporters to foster local economic development and reduce poverty.
A cooperative designed to protect and improve the working conditions of taxi drivers while offering quality services to users.
A cooperative agency that licenses media content.
A short food supply chain platform supporting farmers and food hubs with e-commerce solutions.
A platform for connecting families with trusted caregivers to provide affordable childcare.
A match-making platform connecting neighbours who offer and need services, fostering local service exchanges.
A community-owned cooperative providing sign language interpreting services to deaf users and those needing access support.
A platform offering software tools for fishing cooperatives to manage organizations and promote sustainable fisheries.

An autonomous collective creating decentralized infrastructure and apps for clients.
A workers' cooperative promoting a fair economy for frontline workers and underserved communities.
A cooperative start-up that merges social marketplaces and financial services to boost the resilience of cooperatives globally.
A cooperative online learning platform empowering learners and educators.
An online platform for documentary films that supports original filmmaking through post-production studios.
A taxi driver-owned cooperative promoting app-based, democratically controlled services.

Source: Author's original elaboration.

The large majority of platform cooperatives are business-to-consumer (37%) and business-to-business (29,5%). The 18,5% are both B2B a B2C. A small percentage is instead consumer-to-consumer (7%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Business



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Platform cooperatives engage also in a broad range of altruistic and solidaristic activities that aim to support their communities and promote social responsibility. Many cooperatives offer free educational courses, such as farmer training, funded through special programs. They open-source apps and tools, like those for cost and profit calculation.

Some cooperatives provide essential services for specific groups, such as taxi drivers, by offering vehicle preparation, insurance, bookkeeping, and car washing, while other drivers cooperatives focus on "*organizing drivers and policy work*" (survey respondent). Campaign coordination, partnership building, and free access to cooperative directories are examples of broader community support. Information is often freely shared through podcasts, workshops, tech talks, and online spaces, reaching wide audiences to explain cooperative models.

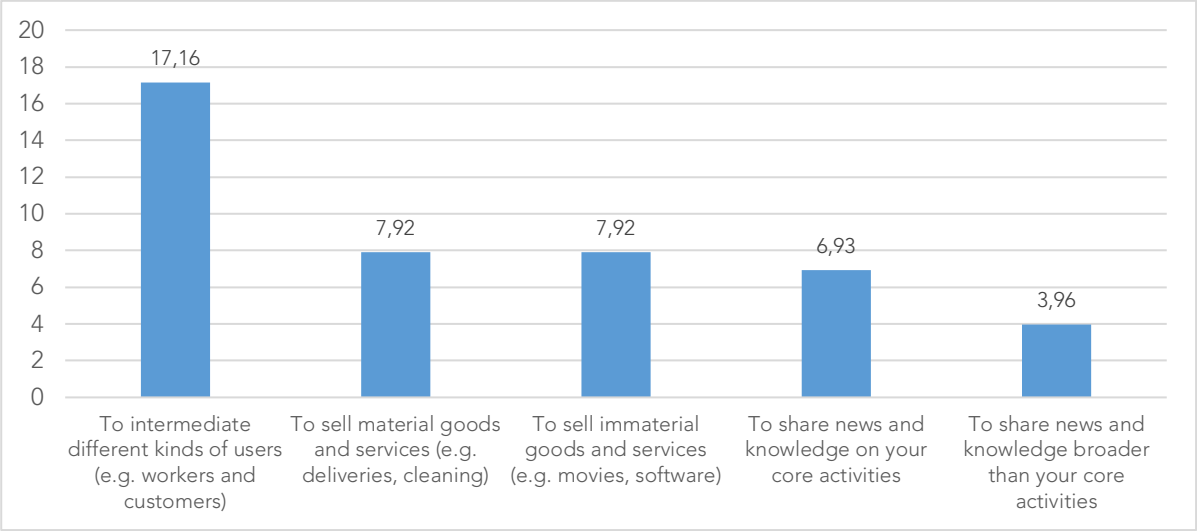
Some platform cooperatives are involved in the open-source movement, coordinating with groups like Creative Commons, participating in Linux user groups, and offering free consulting and hosting for NGOs. Others provide transparency and peer-to-peer matching for those in need to "*empower them by allowing them to express their own needs, and enables supporters to support those in need in their neighbourhood or anywhere else*" (survey respondent), fostering solidarity and combating poverty through in-kind donations and localized support

Additional efforts include offering training for platform use, promoting sustainable food practices, and creating free access platforms where vendors receive 100% of sales revenue. Platform cooperatives also focus on institutional development, building partnerships between associations, and providing community outreach through member meetings and social networks. Some offer free access to cultural content, like films for students, and provide young adults with work experience through community partnerships.

5.1.6. Data, digital and blockchain

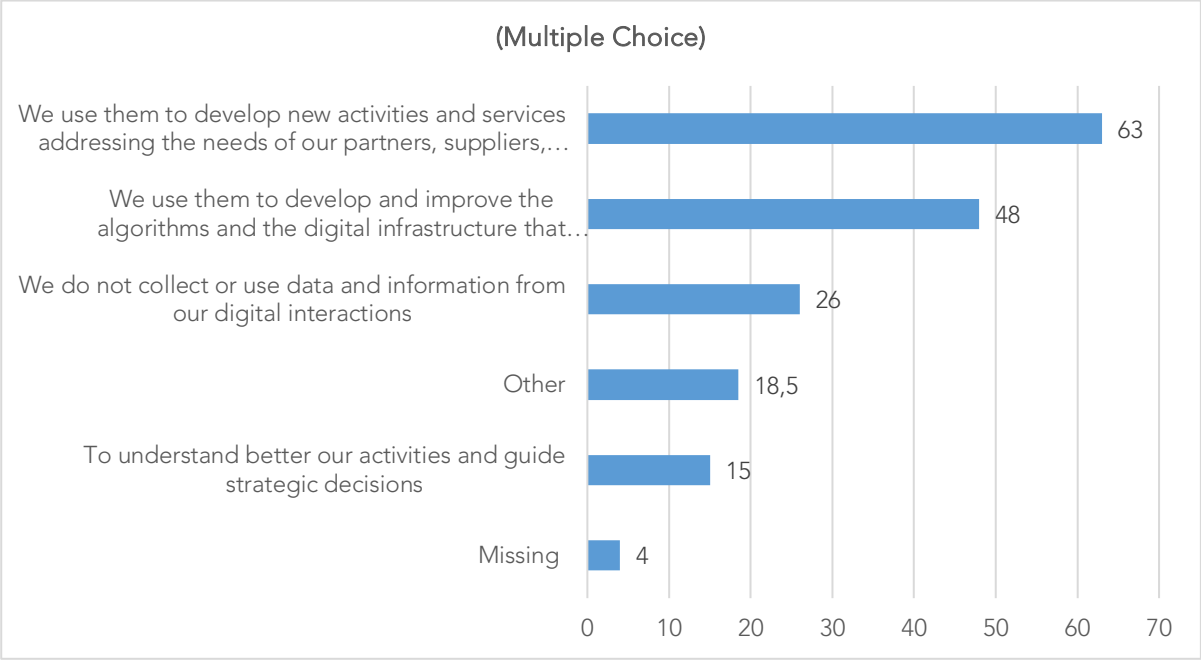
Data indicates that platform cooperatives primarily use digital technology to facilitate the intermediation of different kinds of users, aligning with the economic definition of platforms (Figure 12). They also utilise digital technology to sell material and immaterial services, and to share news and knowledge on their core activities. Only a few use it to share news and knowledge broader than their core activities. The 63% of platform cooperatives utilise data to develop new activities and services aimed at addressing the needs of their partners, suppliers, customers, and users. The 48% reports using data to improve their algorithms and enhance the existing digital infrastructure. The 26% affirms that they do not use data (yet) (Figure 13).

Figure 12. Score of digital activities



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Figure 13. The use of data



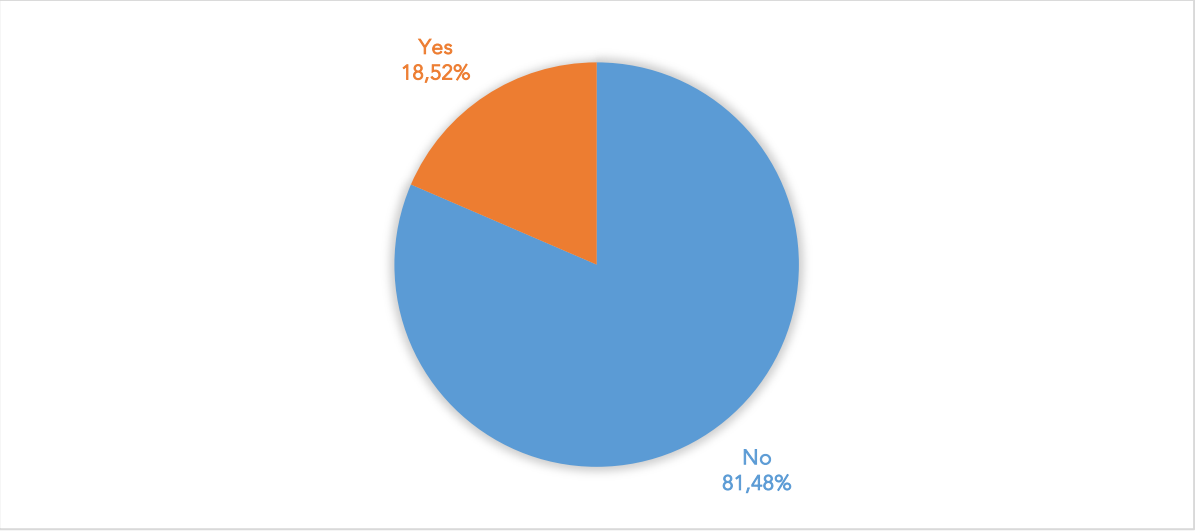
Source: Author's original elaboration.

Approximately 18% of platform cooperatives report using blockchain technology for various purposes (Figure 14). While most apply it for transparency or technical functions, only two use it specifically for governance, highlighting its potential to enhance democratic decision-making. Several respondents outlined current and future strategic

uses—ranging from currency and marketplace integration to issuing certificates. One cooperative offered a particularly rich example encompassing all three applications, i.e., currency, transparency, and governance:

"We provide blockchain development services, and we run ourselves as a DAO, which means that all our accounting and governance practices are on-chain (applications running on blockchain technology). On the accounting side, we receive clients' payments in USDC, accept native tokens from our clients, distribute money through each client project and pay members through blockchain technology. On the governance side, we use blockchain apps to make our token-based decisions. We are in the web3 ecosystem, so we try to test and implement web3 technology in our processes and systems; for example, we recently implemented various decentralized social media platforms built with blockchain technology."

Figure 14. Use of blockchain technology



Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.2. Dimensions

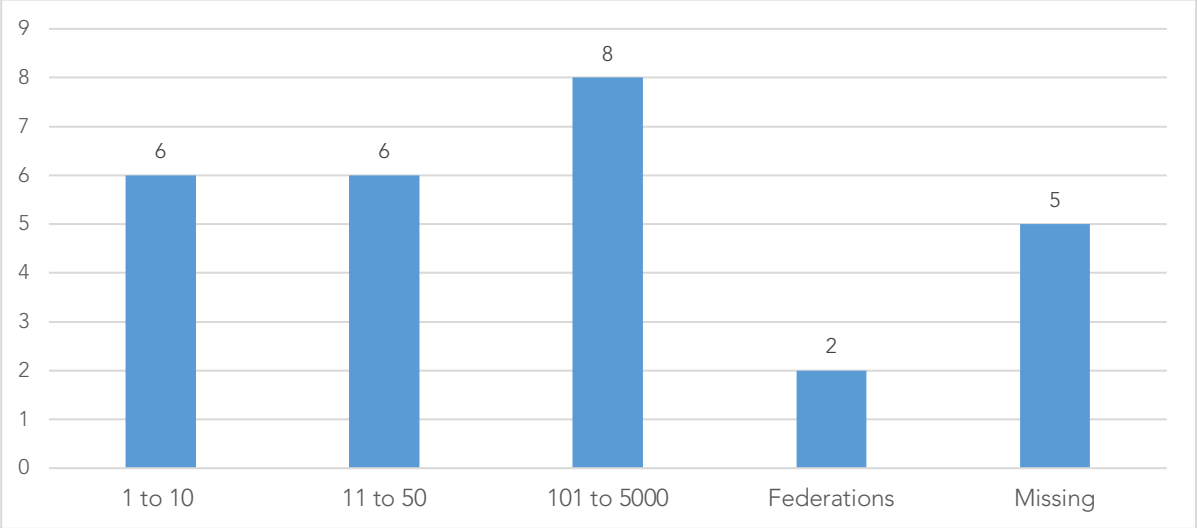
No previous study has ever considered the dimension of a considerable number of platform cooperatives. The dimension of platforms themselves are hard to assess. Revenue alone does not provide the full picture of their development, even the largest platforms, like Uber, have operated at a loss for years backed by large capitals—Uber famously only became profitable after 14 years (Etherington, 2023). Platforms have often

relatively small labor forces, and their performance is usually evaluated based on their ability to attract capital in financial markets and on the size of their markets. However, metrics such as the number of transactions, customers, and providers can vary greatly by sector, and platform cooperatives are generally not present in financial markets or backed by significant investment. Revenue remains a key indicator in assessing the development of platform cooperatives, especially given their locally rooted and community-driven nature. To evaluate their scale and performance, multiple variables are considered: (1) membership, (2) the number of transactions, providers, and customers, (3) revenue, and (4) the size of their labor force. No single factor provides a complete picture on its own. Therefore, platform cooperatives are classified as small, medium, or large based on a holistic assessment of these combined criteria. While some have achieved notable growth, they remain minuscule compared to trillion-dollar capitalist platforms.

5.2.1. Membership

In terms of membership, platform cooperatives are not confined to only small and medium-sized organizations, as is often assumed. The survey reveals a diverse range: six cooperatives fall into the small category (1-10 members), another six are medium-sized (11-50 members), and ten have a large membership base, ranging from 101 to 5,000 members, including federations.

Figure 15. Membership

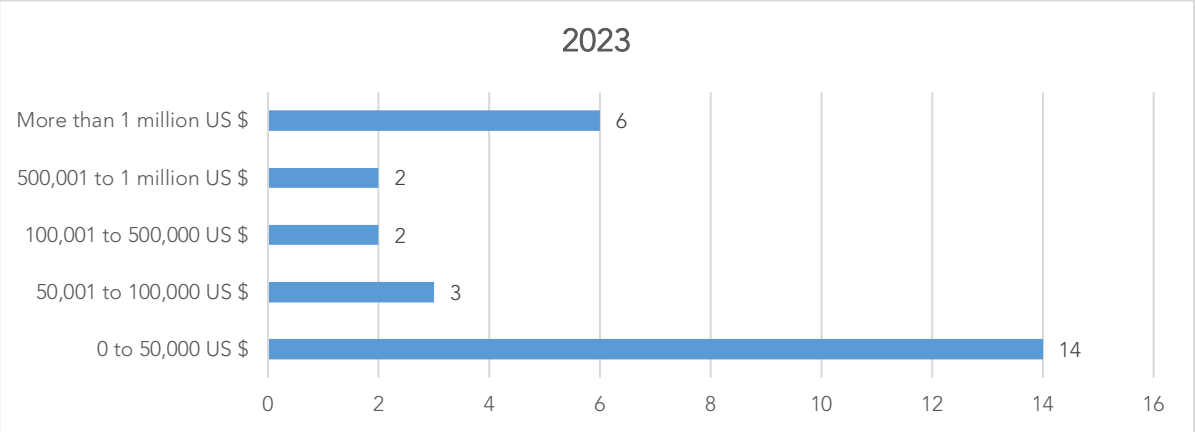


Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.2.2. Revenue

In 2023, the revenue picture of platform cooperatives reveals a range of scales. As in Figure 16, 14 had revenue below 50,000 USD. Four platforms reported revenue ranging from 100,001 to 1 million USD, while six reported revenue exceeding 1 million USD in 2023.

Figure 16. Revenue



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Table 5 highlights the main goods and services offered by these platforms for a fee. Based on 2023 revenue, platforms are classified as large if their revenue exceeds 1 million USD; medium if it falls between 100,001 and 1 million USD; and small if it ranges from 0 to 100,000 USD.

Table 5. Revenue/goods

N.	Main good/service	Size
1	Local food	M
2	Food delivery and package delivery	S
3	Food delivery	S
4	Childcare	S
5	Food	S
6	Delivery	S
7	Taxi transport services	L
8	Training	S
9	Data about the solidarity economy	S
10	Web3 development services	L
11	Video conferencing and Cloud	L

12	Ride hailing and food delivery	M
13	Transport	S
14	Lessons	S
15	GIS-based platforms, Web maps	L
16	Marketplace	S
17	Software, research and consulting	S
18	Services, mutualisation of goods and knowledges	M
19	Marketplace	S
20	Delivery and e-commerce	S
21	SaaS for small-scale fishing organizations	S
22	Sign language interpreting	M
23	Stock media	L
24	Movie streaming	S
25	Transportation - rideshare	L
26	Carsharing	S
27	Taxi rides	S

Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.2.3. Market

Table 6 illustrates market development by examining the number of providers, customers, and transactions in 2023. Platforms are categorized as small if the total number of providers, customers, and/or transactions is 19 or fewer; medium if the total ranges from 20 to 499; and large if it exceeds 500. Regarding the number of transactions, the figures are only indicative and depend on the nature of the business. Some respondents specified the measurement used (e.g., invoices, hours, clicks, rides), while most did not.

Table 6. Market

N.	Providers 2023	Customers 2023	Transactions 2023	Size
1	1,200	60,000	300,000	L
2	700	20,000	30,000	L
3	13	1,500	2,268	L
4	0	6,000	1,000	L
5	4	5	200	S
6	-	-	-	-
7	550	954,000	1,400,000	L

8	24	24	200	M
9	-	-	10	S
10	30	12	750	L
11	2,000	10,000	10,000	L
12	300+	3,000	25,000	L
13	-	100	3,000	L
14	-	30	100	M
15	20	150	2,500,000	L
16	25	950	7,500	L
17	200	12,000	12,000	L
18	10,000	100,000	-	L
19	4	15	12	S
20	40	-	1,200	L
21	25	25	-	M
22	150	150	5,000	L
23	-	-	-	-
24	300	10,100	291,602	L
25	2	-	-	-
26	15	22	211	M
27	2	100	250	M

Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.2.4. Labor

The labor force was assessed based on two categories: workers directly employed by the platform ("workers for pay") and those working through the platform ("through the company") (Mannan and Pek, 2023). Many platform cooperatives employ traditional platform workers as paid employees, thereby avoiding the precarity commonly associated with gig work. Regarding direct employment, the data show that two platforms do not yet compensate any workers. Eleven platforms employ between one and four workers, while six employ between five and nine. Four platforms have between 20 and 49 directly employed workers, and only one platform reports over 50. In contrast, five platforms have over 50 workers engaged through the platform's ecosystem, with two reporting more than 500. Additionally, four platforms have between 20 and 49 such workers, while seven have fewer than 20. Table 7 presents detailed data on the labor force, with classifications defined as small (1-9 workers), medium (10-49), and large (more than 50).

Table 7. Workers

N.	Workers for pay 01.2024	Through the company 01. 2024	Part-time 01.2024	Volunteers 2023	Size
1	1 to 4	1,000	50+	-	L
2	1 to 4	50+	50+	2	L
3	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	3	S
4	1 to 4	-	5 to 9	3	S
5	5 to 9	5 to 9	1 to 4	5	S
6	5 to 9	50+	-	10	L
7	27	550	1 to 4	0	L
8	5 to 9	20 to 49	20 to 49	20	M
9	0	0	0	7	S
10	50+	50+	20 to 49	0	L
11	10 to 19	10 to 19	5 to 9	8	M
12	5 to 9	50+	50+	40+	L
13	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1	S
14	0	20 to 49	20 to 49	7	M
15	20 to 49	20 to 49	1 to 4	1,000	L
16	1 to 4	-	-	40	S
17	10 to 19	-	10 to 19	-	M
18	1 to 4	-	Other	-	S
19	5 to 9	10 to 19	10 to 19	6	M
20	1 to 4	-	-	0	S
21	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	4	S
22	5 to 9	50+	20 to 49	7	L
23	20 to 49	-	5 to 9	0	M
24	10 to 19	20 to 49	20 to 49	2	M
25	20 to 49	-	-	100	L
26	1 to 4	-	1 to 4	-	S
27	1 to 4	10 to 19	1 to 4	10	S

Source: Author's original elaboration.

Additionally, Table 7 reveals a substantial presence of part-time workers and volunteers within these companies, highlighting the need for further qualitative research into the job quality provided by these platforms.

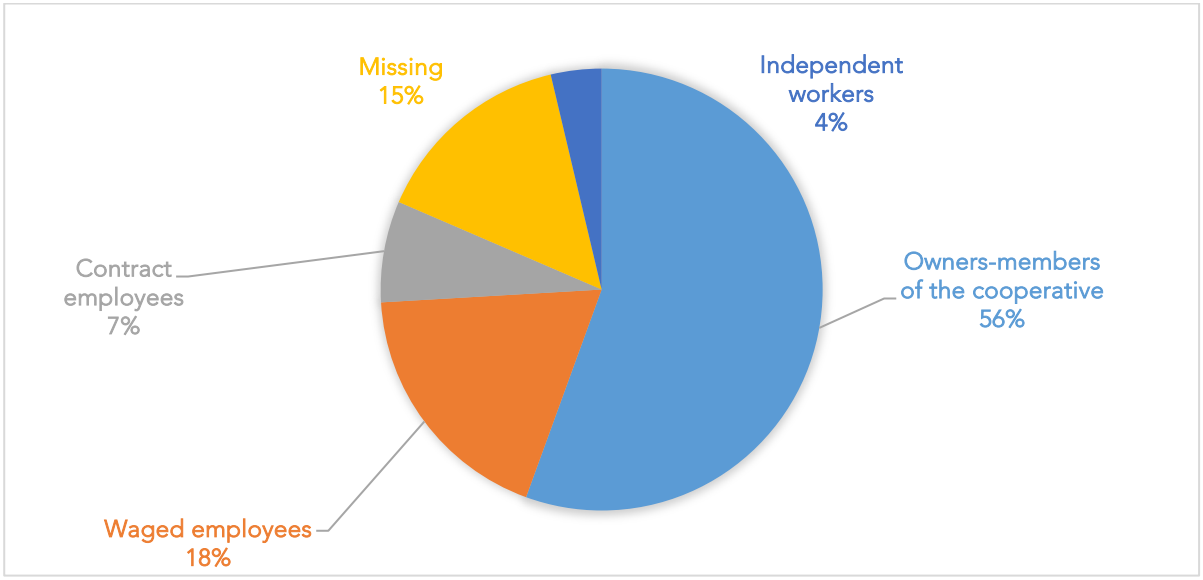
Aside from the size of the labor force, the data provide further insights into the quality of work relations within these platforms on two key areas:

1. The most representative type of workers (e.g., worker-members, contractors, etc.) in the cooperative;
2. Who decides the terms of the contract.

Notably, only 56% of platform cooperatives reported that worker-members form the largest group within the enterprise (Figure 17). Meanwhile, 18% identified waged

employees as the largest group, 7% cited contract employees, and 4% mentioned independent contractors. This data suggests that not all platform cooperatives are primarily composed of worker-members. In many cases, most workers may lack both ownership and political power within the cooperative.

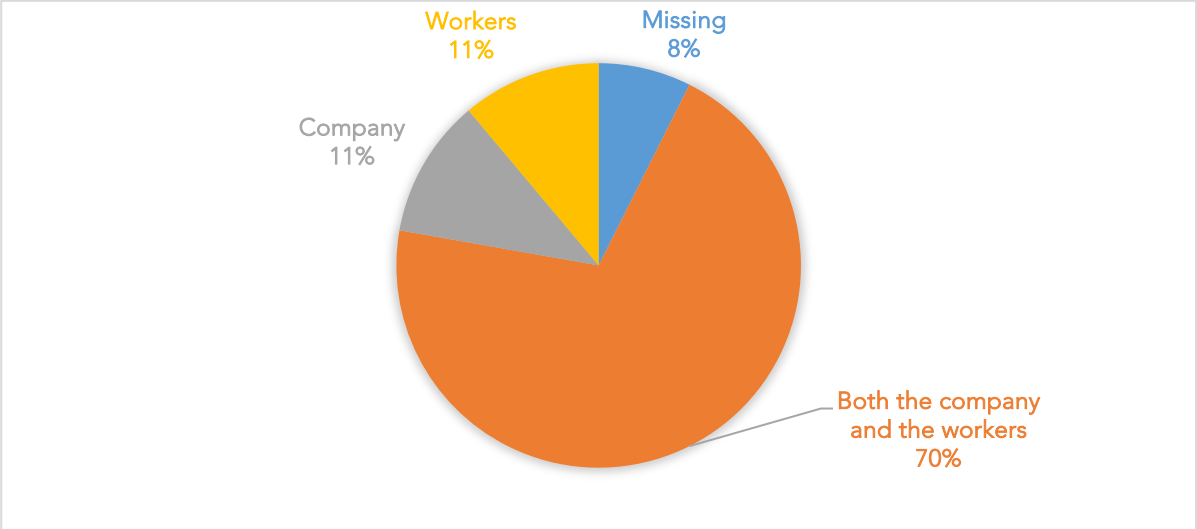
Figure 17. Largest group of workers



Source: Author's original elaboration.

According to the responses (Figure 18), 81% of platform cooperatives claim that worker contracts are determined either solely by the workers themselves (11%) or through a collaborative process between the workers and the company (70%). In contrast, 9% of respondents report that the company unilaterally determines the contracts. These findings underscore a strong emphasis on worker involvement or collaboration in the contract determination process.

Figure 18. Who decides on the contract



Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.2.5. Dimensions

Among the 27 platform cooperatives surveyed—evaluated based on membership size, revenue, labor force, and market—10 were classified as large, nine as small, and eight as medium (Table 7) within platform cooperatives. To qualify as a large platform cooperative in 2024, an organization must have more than 50 workers, at least 100 members, conduct over 500 transactions, and generate at least one million USD in revenue in 2023.

To determine these classifications, numerical values were assigned to each size category for every variable: 0.33 for small, 0.66 for medium, and 0.99 for large. Each cooperative's total score was calculated by summing these values. Cooperatives were defined as large if their total score ranged from 2.97 to 3.96, medium if between 1.99 and 2.96, and small if between 1.32 and 1.98.

Table 8. Summary table

N.	Good/service	Membership	Revenue	Labor	Market	Size
1	Local food	S	M	L	L	L
2	Food delivery and package delivery	-	S	L	L	M
3	Food delivery	S	S	S	L	S
4	Childcare	S	S	S	L	S
5	Food	-	S	S	S	S
6	Delivery	L	S	L	-	M
7	Taxi transport services	L	L	L	L	L
8	Training	M	S	M	M	M
9	Data about the solidarity economy	M	S	S	S	S
10	Web3 development services	L	L	L	L	L
11	Video conferencing and Cloud	M	L	M	L	L
12	Ride hailing and food delivery	L	M	L	L	L
13	Transport	S	S	S	L	S
14	Lessons	M	S	M	M	M
15	GIS-based platforms, Web maps	M	L	L	L	L
16	Marketplace	-	S	S	L	S
17	Software, research and consulting	-	S	M	L	M
18	Services, mutualisation of goods and knowledges	L	M	S	L	M
19	Marketplace	M	S	M	S	M
20	Delivery and e-commerce	S	S	S	L	S
21	SaaS for small-scale fishing organizations	-	S	S	M	S
22	Sign language interpreting	L	M	L	L	L
23	Stock media	L	L	M	-	L
24	Movie streaming	L	S	M	L	L
25	Transportation - rideshare	L	L	L	-	L
26	Carsharing	L	S	S	M	M
27	Taxi rides	S	S	S	M	S

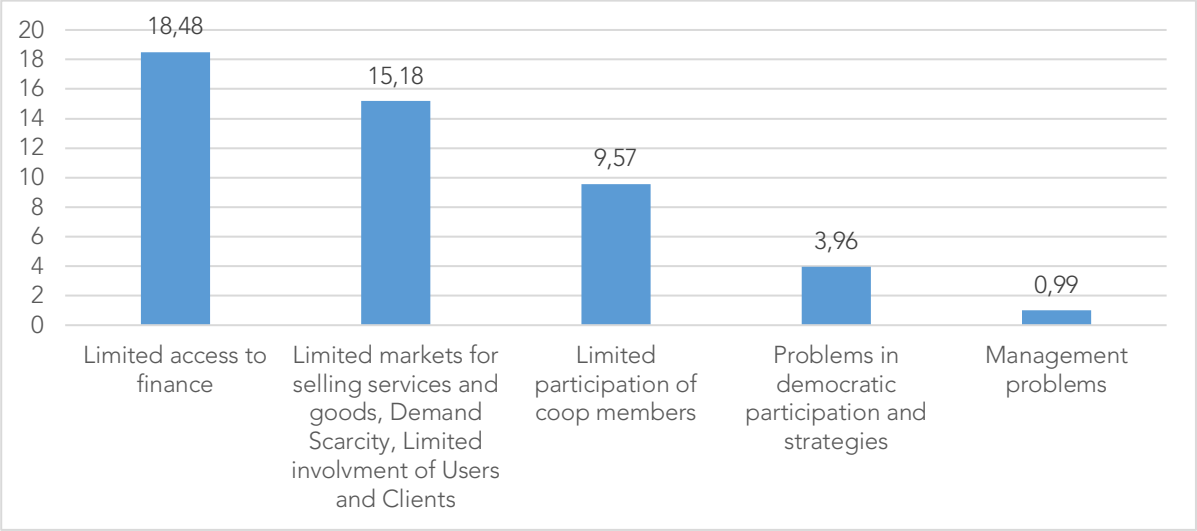
Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.3. Challenges

The survey outlines four major platform cooperatives' challenges: (1) legal barriers, (2) financial constraints, (3) issues related to governance and democratic participation, and (4) difficulties in scaling and expanding within competitive markets. Limited access to finance stands out as the most pressing concern for platform cooperatives (score of 18.48 and the first choice for 15) (Figure 19). Additionally, platform cooperatives have difficulties in expanding their demand and supply markets—notably, large platforms invest millions in marketing to build their user bases. Finally, they struggle to maintain a

high level of member participation and face issues related to democratic decision-making and strategic planning.

Figure 19. Score of challenges



Source: Author's original elaboration.

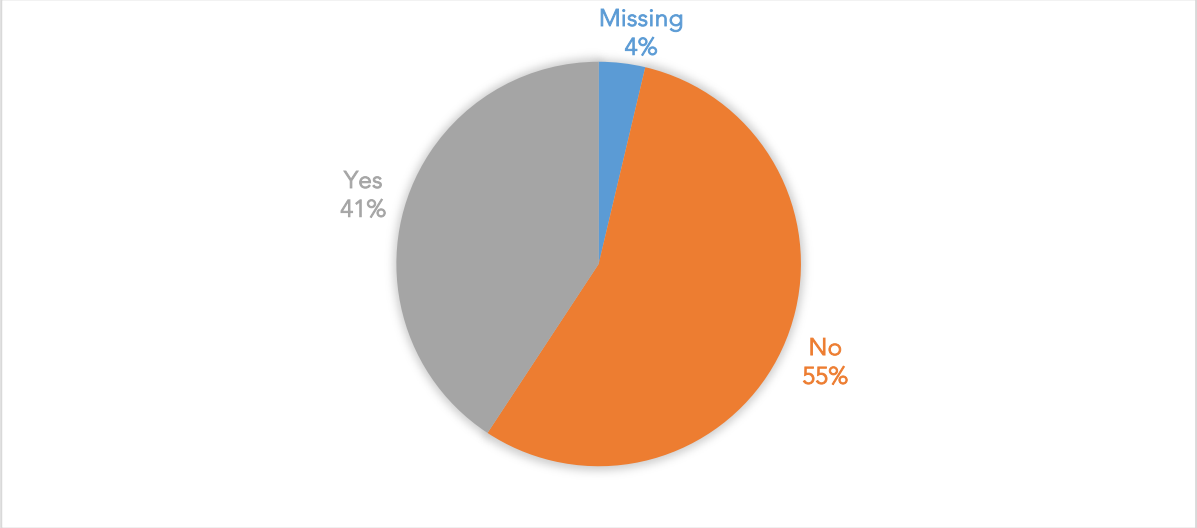
5.3.1. Legal barriers

Platform cooperatives face various regulatory hurdles across different countries, markets and industries. The 41% of platform cooperatives have encountered legal barriers in developing their businesses (Figure 20). One of the major challenges for a driver cooperative was acquiring a regulatorily compliant app platform. This required undergoing a strict approval process to ensure that the app accurately calculates distance and waiting times for taxi rides to generate correct fares: "A significant barrier we faced was to acquire a regulatorily compliant app platform. We had to go through strict regulatory approval process to ensure our app calculates distance and waiting time for a taxi ride accurately to calculate fares". Additionally, in Canada, cooperative legislation mandates that the majority of board members be Canadian, despite the cooperative representing members in many countries. Licensing requirements for ride-hailing services vary by city, adding to the complexity, while childcare-related services must navigate a myriad of regulations that differ from state to state.

Some platform cooperatives face further limitations due to the lack of statutory asset lock, which restricts access to grants typically available to charities. In cities like New York, where Uber and Lyft dominate the ride-hailing market, regulatory demands pose a

significant challenge too. In other regions, the situation is similarly complex. In Thailand, foreigners face restrictions, while Turkey lacks proper legislation for social and platform cooperatives. Moreover, in the EU, evolving industry laws aimed at curbing freelance platform work make it difficult to establish true entrepreneurial cooperatives.

Figure 20. Legal barriers

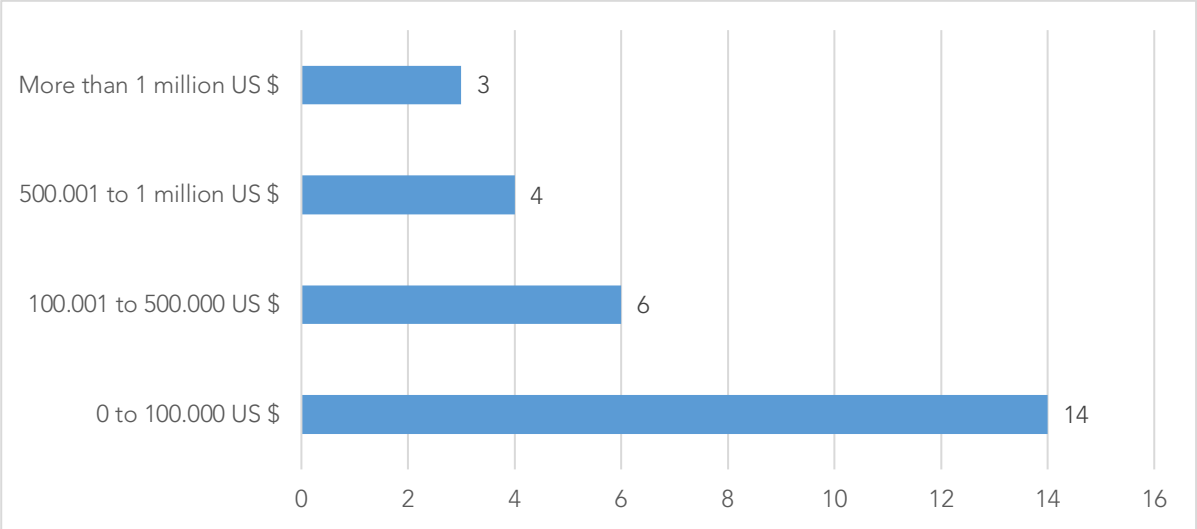


Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.3.2. Finance

The capital conundrum, i.e., the challenge to accumulate capital to be and grow, has always posed a significant challenge for cooperatives (Borkin, 2019). Cooperatives often lack the necessary capital to grow and develop, especially when compared to capitalist platforms that capture trillions in financial markets. The vast majority of these platform cooperatives is supported by minimal investment, typically ranging from 0 to 100,000 USD (Figure 21). However, in some sectors with high human capital and technological skills, such as software development, investment may be less necessary narrowing the capital conundrum to specific industries. One respondent explicitly noted that no investment was required at all, despite being part of one of the largest platform cooperatives. Furthermore, 10 platform cooperatives secured investments between 100,001 and 1 million USD, while only three managed to obtain funding exceeding 1 million USD.

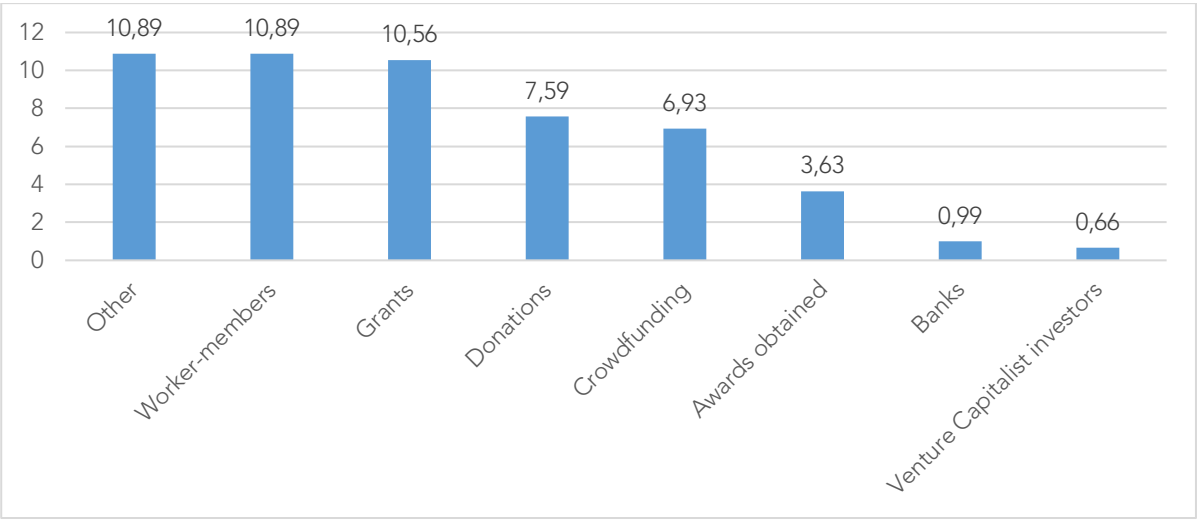
Figure 21. Investments since foundation



Source: Author's original elaboration.

The sources of investment for platform cooperatives vary, with the primary ones being contributions from worker-members and grants, which received scores of 10.89 and 10.56, respectively. Donations and crowdfunding also emerged as significant sources. Notably, almost none of the cooperatives received funding from banks or venture capitalists, while only a minority benefited from award-based funding (Figure 22). A relevant value of 10.89 was not captured by the available options.

Figure 22. Score of the source of investments



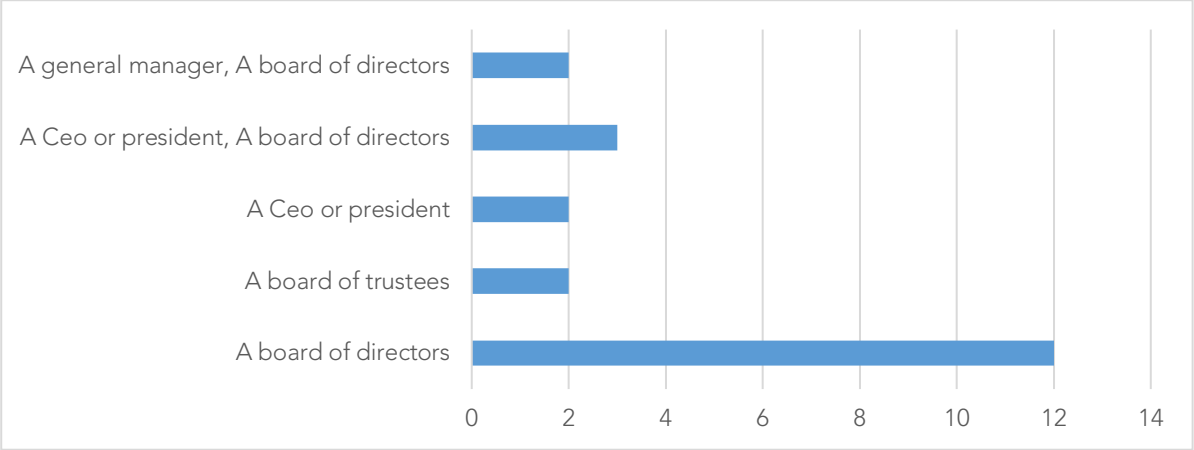
Source: Author's original elaboration.

5.3.3. Governance

In platform cooperatives, key decisions are generally made by a board of directors, as indicated by 12 respondents (Figure 23). However, decision-making can involve various actors such as the general assembly, the CEO, or a general manager, with many cooperatives adopting a combination of these roles.

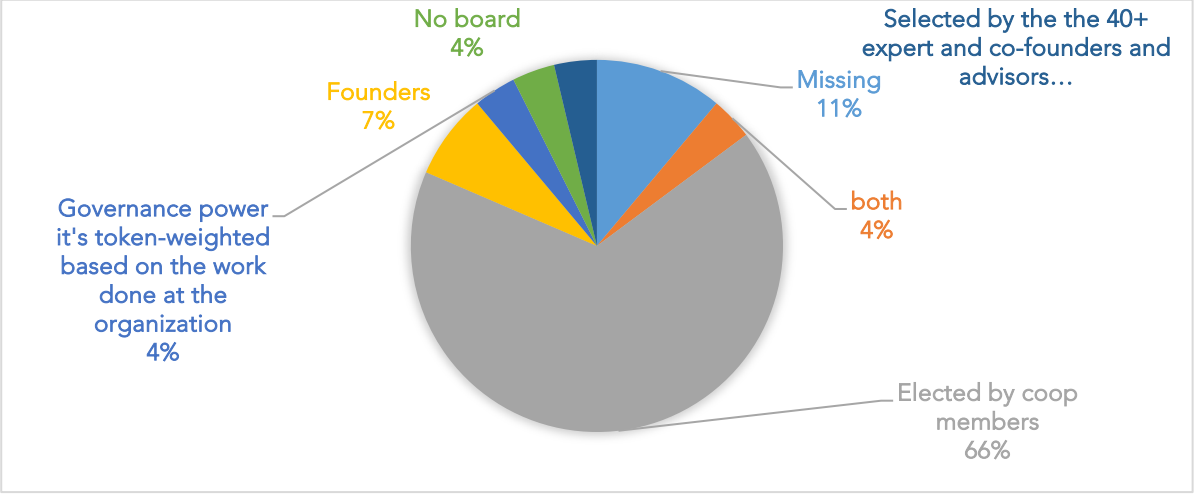
A majority (66%) of respondents report that the board is elected by cooperative members (Figure 24). Elections are typically held annually (26% of respondents), though some cooperatives elect boards every two, three, or four years (Figure 25). Boards tend to be small, consisting of three, five, or seven members (Figure 26).

Figure 23. Who takes key decisions



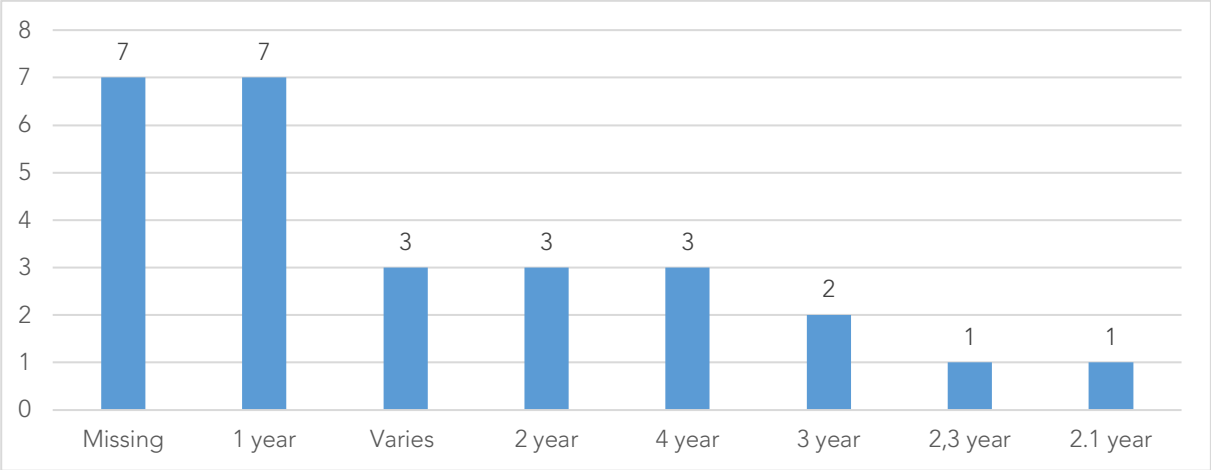
Source: Author's original elaboration.

Figure 24. Who elects the board



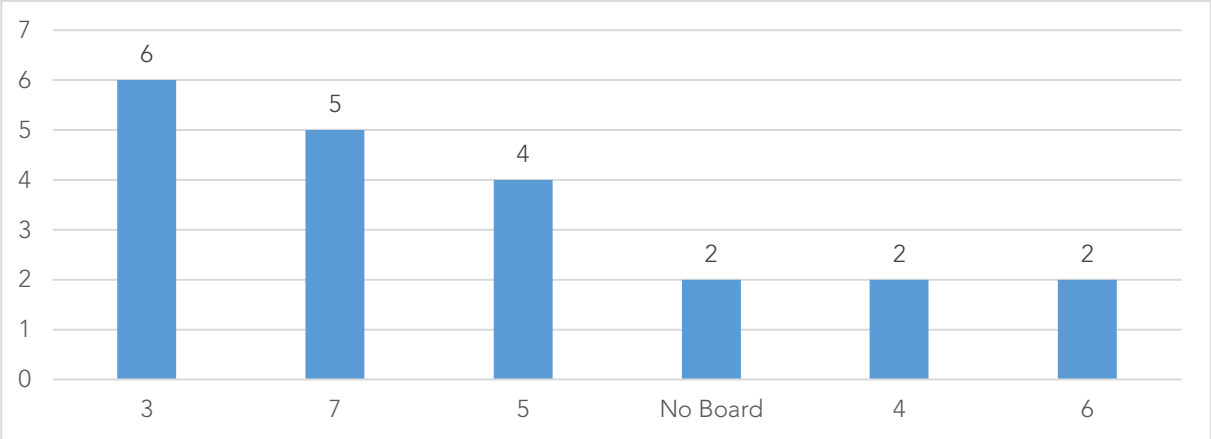
Source: Author's original elaboration.

Figure 25. Time on the board



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Figure 26. Board size



Source: Author's original elaboration.

Democratic governance in platform cooperatives reflects the traditional contradiction between the benefits of involving a diverse range of perspectives and skills and the urgency demanded by market conditions. While democracy is often described as time-consuming, it is also seen as a way to enhance engagement and improve the value of the business.

An open-ended question exploring the governance of platform cooperatives revealed five core strengths and six recurring weaknesses in their democratic structures.

Among the strengths, the diverse and talented membership of many cooperatives emerged as a key asset. A broad base of contributors often brings a wide range of skills,

perspectives, and experiences, which can enhance innovation, responsiveness, and the cooperative's overall adaptability. In addition to diversity, many cooperatives signal to be characterized by transparent and democratic governance structures that ensure members retain meaningful control over decision-making processes. Horizontal and participatory governance frameworks are often credited with fostering a culture of openness, accountability, and collective ownership, reinforcing members' commitment to the cooperative's goals.

Another prominent strength is the flexibility and autonomy enabled by flat hierarchies and collaborative leadership models. These configurations empower members to contribute actively to strategic choices and to shape the cooperative's direction in alignment with shared values. Financially, some cooperatives ensure that value flows back to contributors through fair distribution mechanisms, such as profit-sharing or token-based systems. This redistribution of surplus not only incentivizes participation but also reduces overhead by minimizing extractive ownership structures. Lastly, the strong mission orientation observed in many platform cooperatives serves as a unifying force, sustaining motivation and organizational cohesion even when resources are limited. This is particularly evident in cooperatives where both users and workers are actively involved, strengthening ties with local communities and reinforcing a shared sense of purpose.

However, democratic governance also presents notable challenges. A recurring weakness is low member engagement, particularly in larger cooperatives where participation in governance may be inconsistent or limited to a small core group. This lack of broad-based involvement can undermine the very democratic ideals that cooperatives aspire to uphold. Closely related is the issue of time-consuming decision-making processes. While inclusivity and deliberation are central to cooperative governance, they often slow down operations and make it difficult to respond swiftly to competitive market dynamics or crises. In some cases, members used to hierarchical corporate settings may find it difficult to adapt to collective decision-making, contributing to friction and inefficiency. With the words of one respondent, "*While flat hierarchies are one of our core values, they have created conflicts for people coming from corporate backgrounds, who struggle with open-ended tasks, collective accountability, and the absence of middle management*" .

Additionally, governance power disparities can emerge when decision-making is based on token-weighted systems or contribution metrics, potentially marginalizing less active or less technically proficient members. This is especially problematic in areas requiring specialized expertise, such as software development, where democratic processes may

not always yield optimal decisions. Ambiguities in governance structures further exacerbate inefficiencies; the decentralized nature of many cooperatives can lead to unclear roles and responsibilities, impeding effective execution of decisions. Many platform cooperatives also face practical limitations stemming from their reliance on voluntary or part-time work, which constrains their ability to sustain ongoing engagement and operational capacity. In the word of a respondent "*All-volunteer board struggles to maintain level of activity necessary to engage members*". Finally, cooperatives with international membership denounce encountering logistical difficulties due to geographical dispersion and time zone differences, which can hinder real-time collaboration and delay key processes.

6. Conclusion

Platform cooperativism is a social movement encompassing enterprises, researchers, federations, and solidarity technology initiatives, while there are three main types of platform cooperatives: 1) *platform cooperatives*: primarily platform, online, and active cooperatives; 2) *hybrid cooperatives*: cooperative-run platforms where the main business is not yet fully online or is only partially online; 3) *inactive platform cooperatives*: platform cooperative projects that are either just launched, on hold, or nearing failure.

Platform cooperatives have predominantly emerged over a short time span, with most being established between 2016 and 2021. They are largely legally concentrated in the Global North, particularly in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Platform cooperatives remain relatively few and are incomparable in scale to trillion-dollar platform giants. However, some have successfully developed robust businesses, achieving millions in revenues, substantial market presence, and involving hundreds of members and workers.

Platform cooperatives operate across a variety of sectors, predominantly in food, transport, and software development. Most of them intermediate either business-to-consumer (B2C) or business-to-business (B2B). Legally, they are registered under diverse structures but are mainly organized as worker or multi-stakeholder cooperatives. While most platform cooperatives do not use blockchain technology, nearly one-fifth utilize it for purposes such as governance, transparency, and currency.

The 41% of them report facing significant legal barriers in various domains, alongside a general lack of support and regulation in their respective countries. Funding remains a critical issue for these cooperatives. Among the 27 surveyed, 14 reported investments

below 100,000 USD, primarily sourced from worker members, grants, donations, and crowdfunding. This lack of capital is identified as the most pressing concern, contributing to difficulties in expanding markets and demand. Additionally, many cooperatives struggle to maintain high levels of member participation.

Further research is needed to examine the political identity of platform cooperativism and explore viable solutions to the multifaceted challenges it faces, including particularly the major issues related to finance, markets, legal, governance, and working conditions within platform cooperatives. The research on the hurdles of platform cooperatives is today more crucial than ever, and must consider the variations across different sectors, geographies, and markets. For instance, software platform cooperatives in the US may be more likely to overcome the capital conundrum, yet they might face greater legal barriers. Echoing Schneider's (2018: 325) words, however, this research must be carried out constructively, focusing on potential solutions rather than undermining workers' efforts to create better working conditions:

> "I hope, also, that the critiques of this nascent movement might come in the form of challenges rather than repudiations that could cut it at the root. It should be a foregone conclusion, but is too often not, that in a society that claims to be democratic, the advancement of democracy into new spheres of social life should be a question of how, not whether."

These data, which do not claim to offer a complete picture, are not meant to discourage the creation of platform cooperatives or more broadly digital solidarity economies. Rather, they underscore the need for the cooperative movement to engage seriously with the digital transition and highlight the crucial role that cooperative federations and supportive public policies can play in helping platform cooperatives navigate their main challenges. At the same time, the study points to the importance of further research on working conditions within platform cooperatives and to the value of developing self-assessment tools that can help prevent both the self-exploitation of co-founders and the exploitation of cooperative members and waged employees.

References

Albornoz, B., Espelt, R., Grohmann, R. & Kasparian, D. (2024). *Digital Solidarity Economies*. https://policyreview.info/events/call-papers-digital-solidarity-economies [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Altenried, M. (2022). *The Digital Factory: The Human Labor of Automation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benkler, Y. (2007). *The Wealth of Networks*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Benkler, Y. (2017). The Realism of Cooperativism. In: T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to Hack and to Own*. New York: OR Books, pp. 45-67.

Borkin, S. (2019). *Platform Cooperatives: Solving the Capital Conundrum*. London: Nesta. https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Nesta_Platform_Report_FINAL-WEB_b1qZGj7.pdf [Accessed: 12 December 2025].

Bria, F., Timmers, P. & Gernone, F. (2025). EuroStack - A European Alternative for Digital Sovereignty, *Bertelsmann Stiftung*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11586/2025006

Bunders, D. J., Arets, M., Franke, K. & De Moor, T. (2022). The Feasibility of Platform Cooperatives in the Gig Economy, *Journal of Cooperative Organization and Management*, 10: 100167. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcom.2022.100167

Bunders, D. (2023). Silicon Law Oligarchy: Patterns of Member Participation in the Decision-Making of Platform Cooperatives, *Socio-Economic Review*, 22(3): 1335-1354. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwad058

Bunders, D. J. & De Moor, T. (2023). Paradoxical Tensions as a Double-Edged Sword: Analysing the Development of Platform Cooperatives in the European Gig Economy, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 33(4): 366-382. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/10564926231202422

Bunders, D. (2024). *Gigs on their Own* (Ph.D. thesis). Rotterdam: Rotterdam University Press.

Casilli, A. A. (2025). *Waiting for Robots: The Hired Hands of Automation*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Cini, L. (2023). How Algorithms are Reshaping the Exploitation of Labor-Power: Insights into the Process of Labor Invisibilization in the Platform Economy, *Theory and Society*, 52: 885-911. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-023-09520-9

Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. Yale: Yale University Press.

Cutolo, D., Hargadon, A. & Kenney, M. (2021). Competing on Platforms, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 62(4): 22-30.

Culpepper, P. D. & Thelen, K. (2020). Are We All Amazon Primed? Consumers and the Politics of Platform Power, *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(2): 288-318. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019852687

Della Porta, D. & Diani, M. (2020), *Social Movements: An introduction* (4th ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Della Porta, D., Chesta, R. E. & Cini, L. (2023). *Labour Conflicts in the Digital Age*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Etherington, D. (2023). *Uber Reports First Quarterly Operating Profit in Q2 2023 Results.* TechCrunch. https://techcrunch.com/2023/08/01/uber-reports-first-quarterly-operating-profit/ [Accessed: 11 December 2025].

Galbraith, J. K. (1952). *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Gawer, A. & Srnicek, N. (2021). *Online platforms: Economic and societal effects*. European Parliamentary Research Service, Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA), European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/656336/EPRS_STU(2021)656336_EN.pdf [Accessed: 11 December 2025].

Ghirlanda, P. & Kirov, V. (2024). An Alternative Organizational Model for a More Democratic and Equitable Digital Economy: A Systematic Literature Review on Platform Cooperativism Through the Lens of Stakeholder Theory, *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 95(4): 1197-1221. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/apce.12478

Gray, M. L. & Suri, S. (2019). *Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass*. New York: Harper.

Grohmann, R. (2021). Rider Platforms? Building Worker-Owned Experiences in Spain, France and Brazil, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 120(4): 839-852. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-9443392

Grohmann, R. (2023). Not Just Platform, Nor Cooperatives: Worker-Owned Technologies from Below, *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 16(4): 274-282. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcad014

Grohmann, R. (2025). Labor-Atories of Digital Economies: Latin America as a Site of Struggles and Experimentation, *Weizembaum Journal of the Digital Society,* 5(1). DOI: https://doi.org/10.34669/wi.wjds/5.1.6

Hassan, S. & De Filippi, P. (2021). Decentralized Autonomous Organization, *Internet Policy Review*, 10(2). DOI: https://doi.org/10.14763/2021.2.1556

Hassan, S. & De Filippi, P. (2023). DAO Decentralized Autonomous Organizations. In: V. Ferrari, F. Idelberger, A. Leiter, M.-C. Valiente & B. Bodó (Eds.), *Log out: A Glossary of Technological Resistance and Decentralization*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, pp. 213-234.

Huws, U. (2014). *Labor in the Global Digital Economy: The Cybertariat Comes of Ages.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Hao, K. (2025). *Empire of AI*. New York: Penguin Press.

Hung, K. (2025). *Beyond Big Tech Geopolitics: Moving Towards Local and People-Centred Artificial Intelligence*. Transnational Institute. https://www.tni.org/en/article/beyond-big-tech-geopolitics [Accessed: 11 December 2025].

Mayo, E. (2019). Digital democracy? *Options for the International Cooperative Alliance to advance Platform Coops*. International Co-operative Alliance. https://www.uk.coop/resources/digital-democracy-options-international-co-operative-alliance-advance-platform-co-ops-unfound [Accessed: 8 October 2025].

Mannan, M. (2022). *The Emergence of Democratic Firms in The Platform Economy: Drivers, Obstacles, and The Path Ahead* (Ph. D. thesis). Leiden: Leiden University Press.

Mannan, M. & Pek, S. (2023). Platform Cooperatives and the Dilemma of Platform Worker Member Participation, *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 39(2): 219-237. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12273

Marshall, S. (2014). *Scritti sull'economia cooperativa*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Martin, B. (2017). Money Is the Root of All Platforms. In: T. Scholz & N. Schneider (Eds.), *Ours to Hack and to Own*. New York: OR Books, pp. 198-215.

Martinelli, F. & Tamascelli, F. (2019). Cooperativismo di piattaforma: esperienze cooperative per uno sviluppo del territorio. In: C. Alvisi, D. Donati, G. Pavani, S. Profeti & C. Tubertini (Eds.), *New Policies and Practices for European Sharing Cities*, Bologna: Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali, Università di Bologna, pp. 185-210.

Martinelli, F., Bozzoni, S., Caroli, F., Tamascelli, F. & Guerini, G. (2019). *Platform Cooperativism in Italy and in Europe*. Ciriec. https://www.ciriec.uliege.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WP2019-27.pdf [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Muldoon, J., Graham, M. & Cant, C. (2024). *Feeding the Machine*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

Nabben, K., Purpusari, N., Kelleher, M. & Sanjay, S. (2021). Grounding Decentralized Technologies in Cooperative Principles: What Can Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (Daos) and Platform Cooperatives Learn From Each Other? . https://ssrn.com/abstract=3979223 [Accessed: 11 December 2025]

Orsi, J. (2014), *The Next Sharing Economy*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpg4PjGtbu0. [Accessed: 11 December 2025].

Parker, G. G., Van Alstyne, M. W. & Choudary, S. P. (2016). *Platform Revolution: How Networked Markets Are Transforming the Economy and How to Make Them Work for You*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Pazatis, A. & Kostakis, V. (2021). Are the most influential websites peer-produced or price-incentivized? Organizing value in the digital economy, *Organization*, 29(4): 757-769. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084211020192

Pentztien, J. (2020). *The Politics of Platform Cooperativism*. Institute of Cooperative Digital Economy. New York. https://ia902809.us.archive.org/15/items/jonas-pentzien-single-web_202012/Jonas%20Pentzien_single_web.pdf [Accessed: 30 April 2025].

Rahman, R. & Thelen, K. (2019). The Rise of the Platform Business Model and the Transformation of Twenty-First-Century Capitalism, *Politics and Society*, 47(2): 177-204. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329219838932

Ratner, C. (2013). *Cooperation, Community, and Co-Ops in a Global Era*. New York: Springer.

Ratner, C. (2015). Neoliberal Co-Optation of Leading Co-Op Organizations and a Socialist Counter-Politics of Cooperation, *Monthly Review*, 66(9): 18-30. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-066-09-2015-02_2

Rikap, C., Durand, C., Paraná, E., Gerbaudo, P. & Marx P. (2024). *Reclaiming Digital Sovereignty: A Roadmap to Build a Digital Stack for People and the Planet*. IIPP White Paper, University College London. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/sites/bartlett/files/reclaiming-digital-sovereignty.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Robey, A. (2022). *What co-ops and DAOs can learn from each other*. FWB. https://www.fwb.help/editorial/what-co-ops-and-daos-can-learn-from-each-other [Accessed: 11 December 2025].

Sandoval, M. (2020). Entrepreneurial Activism? Platform Cooperativism Between Subversion and Co-optation. *Critical Sociology*, 46(6): 801-817. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920519870577

Schneider, N. (2014). *Owning Is the New Sharing*. Sharable. https://www.shareable.net/owning-is-the-new-sharing [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Schneider, N. (2018). An Internet of Ownership: Democratic Design for the Online Economy, *The Sociological Review Monographs*, 66(2): 320-340. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118758533

Schor, J. B. (2014). *Debating the Sharing Economy*. Great Transition Initiative https://greattransition.org/publication/debating-the-sharing-economy [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Schor, J. (2020). *After the Gig: How the Sharing Economy Got Hijacked and How to Win It Back.* California: University of California Press.

Scholz, T. (2014). *Platform Cooperativism Vs. The Sharing Economy.* Medium. https://medium.com/@trebors/platform-cooperativism-vs-the-sharing-economy-2ea737f1b5ad [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Scholz, T. (2016). *Platform Cooperativism. Challenging the Sharing Economy.* Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. https://rosalux.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/RLS-NYC_platformcoop.pdf, 2016. [Accessed: 13 December 2025].

Scholz, T. (2023a). *Own This! How Platform Cooperatives Help Building a Democratic Internet*. London, New York: Verso.

Scholz, T. (2023b). On Labor and Cooperatives. In: R. Segal & M. M. Jahn (Eds.), *Design and solidarity*. New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press, pp. 212-235.

Scholz, T., Mannan, M., Pentzien, J. & Plotkin, H. (2021). *Policies for Cooperative Ownership in the Digital Economy.* Platform Cooperative Consortium and Berggruen Institute.

Scholz, T. & Schneider, N. (Eds.) (2017). *Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet*. New York: OR Books.

Scholz, T. & Tortorici, S. (2025a), 5 Ways Cooperatives Can Shape the Future of AI, *Harvard Business Review*, 25 June. https://hbr.org/2025/06/5-ways-cooperatives-can-shape-the-future-of-ai [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Scholz, T. & Tortorici, S. (2025b). *Cooperative AI?* Institute For the Cooperative Digital Economy. https://archive.org/details/cooperative-ai [Accessed: 10 December 2025].

Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Sundararajan, A. (2016). *The Sharing Economy: The End of Employment and the Rise of Crowd-Based Capitalism*. MIT Press.

Tassinari, A. & Maccarrone, V. (2020). Riders on the Storm: Workplace Solidarity Among Gig Economy Couriers in Italy and the UK, *Work, Employment and Society*, 34(1): 35-54. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017019862954

Terras, M., Anzinger, B., Gooding, P., Mühlberger, G., Nockels, J., Romein, C. A., Stauder, A. & Stauder, F. (2025). The Artificial Intelligence Cooperative: READ-COOP, Transkribus, and the Benefits of Shared Community Infrastructure for Automated Text Recognition, *Open Research Europe*, 5(16). DOI: https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.18747.1

Tortorici, S. (2025). *The Challenges of Platform Cooperatives and the Path Ahead. Global Cooperative Economics and Movements: A Research Companion*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Tortorici, S. (2026, forthcoming). The Blown Head Gasket Effect. The Rise and Struggles of the Drivers Cooperative in New York City, *Internet Policy Review*.

Van Dijck, J., Poell, T. & De Waal, M. (2018). *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Voshmgir, S. (2019). *Token Economy: How Blockchains and Smart Contracts Revolutionize the Economy*. Berlin: BlockchainHub.

Woodcock, J. (2021). *The Fight Against Platform Capitalism: An Inquiry Into the Global Struggles of the Gig Economy*. London: University of Westminster Press.

Yates, L. (2025). *Platform Politics: Corporate Power, Grassroots Movements and the Sharing Economy*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Appendices

A. Surveys

GoogleForms: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1V-gXnI-ER1-i4mUEY8LIbY9A3PkFxzOU8i1bjtvPNwc/viewform?edit_requested=true

LiberaForms: https://my.liberaforms.org/be-part-of-the-platform-cooperatives-economic-data

B. Respondents

1. Abalobi
2. Albatros Tech Cooperative
3. Alilo Scop
4. AlliedUp Cooperative
5. Appjusto [Failed]
6. Bestellenbij.nl
7. Brave Technology Co-operative
8. By-Expressen
9. Carefully
10. Cat Kurierkollektiv Halle/S.
11. Cataki
12. Codigo Libre
13. Colleaga
14. CoopCycle
15. Coopersystem - Cooperativa de Trabalho
16. Cotabo
17. Crow Collective
18. Crystalisr
19. Data Commons Cooperative
20. Datactivist
21. Doc Servizi

22. dOrg
23. Drivers Cooperative - Colorado, LCA
24. Equal Care Co-op
25. Eva Global Corp.
26. Fair Bnb Network Soc. Coop.
27. Fairkom
28. Fare
29. femProcomuns SCCL
30. FountainheadConsulting
31. Framasoft
32. Global Cooperation Corps,
33. Greaterthan
34. Groupmuse
35. Guerrilla Media Collective
36. Hylo
37. Innovation Cooperative Limited
38. Jamgo SCCL
39. Legal Hat
40. Les Coursiers de Metz
41. Les Coursiers Rennais
42. Les oiseaux de passage
43. Lille bike
44. Loomio
45. Magma srl impresa sociale (So.De - Social Delivery)
46. Mediospopulares
47. Meet.coop
48. Mirlo US, LLC
49. Mobicoop

50. Modo Co-operative
51. MyCoolClass Cooperative
52. Narvélos
53. Needs Map
54. Open Collective
55. Open Food Network - Belgium
56. Open Food Network Ireland
57. Open Food Network USA
58. Open Food Network Australia
59. Oregon Clean Power Cooperative
60. Perú Tres i Cooperativa de Plataforma
61. Positive News Ltd
62. Pwiic
63. Qaori Cooperative
64. Radish Cooperative
65. Rayon9
66. Redjar Cooperative of Work. (Cooperativa de Trabajo Redjar Limitada)
67. RedRoot Artists Cooperative
68. Revolver Co-operative Limited
69. Robin Coop Delivery Soc. Coop.
70. Round Sky Solutions
71. Rustine Libre
72. SalusCoop
73. Servicios Digitales para la Pesca Sostenible
74. Signalise Co-op
75. Sira Entrega Confiable
76. Smart Ibérica de Impulso Empresarial
77. Startin'blox

78. Stocksy United
79. Talaios
80. Tamsang-Tamsong
81. Tënk
82. The Drivers Cooperative
83. The Mobility Factory (TMF)
84. United Taxi Cooperative of San Diego
85. What's Cookin' Inc
86. Ziclo-P

C. Failures or inactives

1. Ampled
2. Belo Livraison
3. Blockfood
4. Coco
5. Collective Tools
6. Colibrì
7. Consegne Etiche
8. Coursiers Wallon
9. Covivi
10. Daemo
11. Dark Peak Data Cooperative
12. Digital Cooperative Consortium
13. Drive Taxis Cardiff
14. Faircab
15. FairCoop
16. Fairmondo
17. Fast and Curious

18. Feed the Future
19. Food Faires
20. Food4Me Verona
21. Freedom Coop
22. Green Taxi Cooperative
23. Guerrilla Translation
24. Helva Vence
25. Hen House.coop
26. Hong Kong Platform Cooperative
27. Incubator.coop
28. Katuma
29. Kerala Taxi
30. Khora
31. Korp (France Barter)
32. La Pajara
33. Lêvo Courier
34. Les Coursiers Stéphanois
35. Loconomics
36. Net Zero Heroes
37. Open Food Network Colombia
38. Open food Network Italia
39. Olvo
40. Orleans Cycloposteurs
41. Other Fruit Hong Kong
42. Origin Club Greece
43. People's Ride
44. PetaJakarta
45. Polyploy Coop

46. Por la Chita
47. Puma Entregas
48. Rchain Coop
49. RedHen Collective
50. Rock and Ranges Co-operative Brewery
51. Rodant Bicimissatgeria
52. Rydigo
53. Smart Hungary
54. Solar Harvest.coop
55. Standmakers
56. The Interpreting Collective
57. The Meteor
58. The Rural Woman Co-operative
59. TimesFree
60. Tours N Messengers
61. Vientos
62. Wings
63. York Collective
64. Yumuv

D. Survey in the field

Pretesting, building, and disseminating the survey was a long, comprehensive, and iterative process. The alpha version of the survey was developed in August 2023. Its design was refined with input from a senior expert at the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat), professors from the Political Science and Sociology class at the Scuola Normale Superiore, and platform cooperative specialists. To ensure its effectiveness, this version was tested with three organizations. The feedback from these tests was instrumental in refining both the survey questions and its structure. Following the revisions, over 150 organizations were identified as potential respondents. These organizations were selected based on their relevance to the survey's objectives, drawing

from the Directory of the PCC (version of January 2024), existing literature, and social networks.

They were classified according to various criteria derived from their websites, including factors such as their digital presence, values, perceived stability, sector, legal structure, use of blockchain technology, year of establishment, and country of registration. Using this classification, a preliminary mailing list of approximately 150 contact emails was created, including first-order cooperatives listed by second-order cooperative websites such as Coopcycle, La Rouche Que Dit Oui, Smart, and Open Food Network. Other organizations were contacted directly via the contact forms on their websites. As the survey dissemination progressed, the mailing list was continually updated and expanded. Additional digital cooperatives were identified through the directory, literature reviews, and other sources, such as the Data Coop Club.

The survey was also widely promoted across popular social media platforms, including X, LinkedIn, and the Facebook group "Platform Cooperativism—Discussion and Linkshare". Leading scholars in the field generously helped to share the survey with their networks. Additionally, the Platform Cooperativism Consortium and the European Confederation of Workers Cooperatives (CICOPA) disseminated the survey through their social media channels. Traditional country federations, such as COOP UK and the Social Economy in Turkey, also contributed to the survey's outreach efforts. This widespread sharing of the survey significantly enhanced its visibility and success. As a result of these collaborative efforts, some platform cooperatives not included in the initial mailing list still participated after learning about the survey through social media. The support from leading researchers and federations likely contributed to the high response rates.

However, email and social media outreach efforts proved insufficient for gathering responses from most platform cooperatives. In many cases, we had to directly reach out to co-founders of platform cooperatives via personal emails, messages, and LinkedIn profiles. This personal approach was crucial in securing 51 responses from across six continents within 25 days. The survey typically took between 10 to 30 minutes to complete. Originally, the survey was scheduled to conclude on 31st March 2024; however, due to the continuous influx of responses and feedback, we extended the survey period. It is worth noting that the survey was conducted using Google Forms, which was criticized by one platform cooperative due to their GDPR regulations prohibiting the use of Google tools. Additionally, two other respondents completed the survey on Google Forms but recommended using alternative ethical software.

To mitigate biases from platform cooperatives particularly sensitive to data protection and ethical tool usage, the survey was relaunched on 2nd April using the free and ethical software Liberaforms, with a new deadline set for 1st May. The Liberaforms version of the survey was successfully pretested with the platform cooperative that had initially refused to complete the Google Form. It was then distributed to all individuals who had not yet responded on the mailing list and shared once again on social networks. Furthermore, the survey was endorsed and shared by prominent organizations such as the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), Cooperatives Europe, and the Spanish Cooperative Research Centre (CIRIEC).

By the 1st August 2024, 245 organizations of interest had been reached, with 87 respondents having completed the survey. Among these respondents, 79 completed the survey via Google Forms, while eight used Liberaforms. Two different members of the same platform cooperatives completed the survey. It is noteworthy that their answers differed on many aspects, such as the number of workers, members, values, and use of blockchain. As is well known, personal knowledge bias and positions influence individuals when describing a complex organization. In this specific case, the first answer, which was much more detailed than the second, was considered more reliable. The second response was instead deleted from the database to avoid redundancy.

Acknowledgements

This work would never have been possible without the time and generosity of the 87 respondents to the survey. I owe my deepest thanks to them and to all those who helped disseminate it. I hope these data and reflections may, in some small way, repay your invaluable support.

This research greatly benefited from the input of professors and colleagues from the Class of Political Science and Sociology at Scuola Normale Superiore from its very inception. I am especially grateful to Mario Pianta, who supported the idea of launching this international survey and helped sketch its design from the beginning; and to Guglielmo Meardi, particularly for his insights on the section concerning workers. The survey was significantly improved thanks to the supervision of Giulio Perani, senior researcher at the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat).

I am especially indebted to Morshed Mannan for his substantial and valuable feedback. Our discussions on the online presence of platform cooperatives, the distinction

between first- and second-order cooperatives, and how to effectively capture the experience of workers through and for the platform were instrumental in shaping this research.

I also wish to thank the many scholars and practitioners who offered valuable comments during the numerous international conferences and workshops where I presented earlier versions of this paper. In particular, I am grateful to Marco Marrone and Tiago Viera for their insights on data as a challenge and on the visual and conceptual nature of platform cooperatives; and to Michael Kemmerling, Hans Jörg Trenz, and Marco Deseriis for their thoughtful suggestions.

Special thanks go to Nathan Schneider, Raphael Grohmann, Mark Graham, Simon Pek, Tim Christensen, Damion Bunders, Santosh Kumar, Francesca Martinelli, Rafael Zanatta, Cecilia Muñoz, Alessio Bertolini, Denise Kasparian, Laura Eccher, Alejandro Fortuny-Sicart and Terry Tyldesley, who played a pivotal role in helping disseminate the survey and identifying organizations of interest, among many others. And to Stefania Chiomento and Giulia Sabaini from Euricse who have patiently edited this publication.

Last but not least, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Trebor Scholz and the Platform Cooperativism Consortium at The New School in New York City for their invaluable support in promoting the survey. They were exceptional hosts during the summer of 2024, a period in which I developed many of the reflections presented in this paper.

This research is deeply collective in nature, and I sincerely thank all those who contributed their thought and time to it. I alone remain responsible for any errors.